University of Alberta

Unheard Niagaras
Literary Reputation, Genre, and the Works of May Agnes Fleming, Susie Frances Harrison, and Ethelwyn Wetherald

by

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Canada

We live among unheard Niagaras.
The force that pushes up the meadow grass,
That swells to ampler roundness ripening fruit,
That lifts the brier rose, were it not mute,
Would thunder o'er green earth's sunlit tracts,
More loudly than a myriad cataracts.

—*Ethelwyn Wetherald, "Unheard Niagaras" (1902)*

ABSTRACT

May Agnes Fleming (1840-80), Susie Frances Harrison (1859-1935), and Agnes Ethelwyn Wetherald (1857-1940), were all Canadian-born authors who wrote between 1860 and 1935. Each of them enjoyed some degree of literary prominence in their day, but they are all forgotten in Canadian literature today. None of their works is currently in print, nor have they been for almost a century. Gender, nationality, and history link the three writers, but I have selected them for this study not for their similarities so much as for their distinctiveness. They created and managed their public literary reputations in order to both fit into conventional ideology as well as to publish different attitudes toward gender, nationalism, and sexuality, and they voiced these attitudes in different genres. Each one is a case study in early English-Canadian women writers, but by juxtaposing them I intend to indicate a breadth of accomplishment that is little appreciated in popular perceptions and not much more in academic circles.

By examining the way they wrote and managed their public careers, we better understand early Canadian literature for three women writers of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Also, understanding the dominant ideologies of the day allows us to see how Fleming, Harrison, and Wetherald were at once constrained by and yet pushed beyond the sociocultural limitations of the day. Their works reveal their accomplishment, and articles and reviews allow us to understand how they were viewed by their

contemporaries. Through their public reputations, as documented through articles, letters and public interviews, we see how they fashioned themselves as well as how they were critically seen by others. Reputation can help or hinder public reception, and for all of them, the management of the public life reveals barriers they faced in developing distinction as early Canadian writers. This study chooses three academically "recovered" Canadian women writers in the hopes that viewing them side by side will provide a perspective on what their works reveal about them, about the sociocultural climate in which they lived, and about their contributions to literary history.

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Table of Contents

Introduction

I Introduction: From Recovery to Appreciation ... 1
II Evaluation and Appreciation ... 9
III Double Bind: Trivial or Second-Rate ... 15
IV Gender and Genre ... 22
V Gender and Genre in the Works of Three Women ... 27
VI Unheard Niagaras, Now and Then ... 30
VII Biographical Timelines ... 32
Notes ... 36

Chapter One: "Of Gentle Cast and Features": The Condition of Femininity in the Domestic Fiction of May Agnes Fleming

I.i The Recovery of May Agnes Fleming ... 44
I.ii A Woman's Will ... 54
I.iii Gender and Genre ... 59
I.iv Sufferers, Bullies, Gentlemen—and More ... 68
    I.iv.a Domestic Liberation through Art in *The Actress' Daughter* ... 72
    I.iv.b. Liberation but Isolation in *Carried By Storm* ... 83
    I.iv.c. Marriage in the Dénouement in *Lost for a Woman* ... 90
I.v The Antidomestic in Domestic Fiction and the Pressure to Conform ... 102
I.vi The Patriarchal Paradigm ... 103
I.vii Achieving Notoriety in Popular Fiction ... 108
Notes ... 114

Chapter Two: "The Pioneer is Forced to Fall Behind": The Public Self, Genre, and Nationalism in the Works of Susie Frances Harrison

II.i A Canadian Life in Music and Letters ... 125
II.ii The Nineteenth-Century Canadian Literary Scene ... 134
II.iii Developing the French-Canadian Villanelle ... 141
    II.iii.a A Child-Bride at Cap Santé ... 148
    II.iii.b Prolific Motherhood at Ste. Hilaire ... 150
    II.iii.c Covert Sexuality in the Villanelle ... 155
II.iv Conflicts and Tension in Two Nationalist Novels ... 160

II.iv.a Rural Innocence and Urban Cynicism in Old Quebec ... 162
II.iv.b Searching for a Real Canadian in the Capital ... 174
II.v The Place of Literature on the National Scene ... 182
II.vi What Remains: The Literary Reputation ... 185
Notes ... 195

Chapter Three: "When you are far then are you most my own": Social Purity, Sexuality, and the Love Poetry of Ethelwyn Wetherald

III.i A Poet's Life ... 210
III.ii An Introduction to Helena Coleman ... 216
III.iii The Relationship between Wetherald and Coleman in Letters ... 218
III.iv A Dialogue of Love in Poems ... 230
III.v The Critical Bind: Poetic Criticism and Sexuality ... 243
III.vi Wetherald's Later Love Poetry ... 257
Notes ... 263

Conclusion: Making and Breaking of Literary Reputation

IV.i Fleming's Posthumous Scandal ... 268
IV.ii Harrison's Quest for Self-fulfilment ... 271
IV.iii Wetherald's Modest Disclaimer ... 274
IV.iv Three Perspectives on Who We Were (and Are) ... 282
Notes ... 286

Works Cited ... 287

Appendix A: Selected Poems by Seranus (Susie Frances Harrison) ... 304
Appendix B: Selected Poems by Agnes Ethelwyn Wetherald ... 308
Appendix C: Letter from Dorothy (Wetherald) Rungeling to Jennifer Chambers ... 315
Appendix D: Selected Poems by Helena Coleman ... 317

List of Tables

Table 1: Biographical Timelines ... **34**

List of Abbreviations

AD	*The Actress' Daughter* by May Agnes Fleming
AM	*An Algonquin Maiden* by Ethelwyn Wetherald
CO	*Crowded Out! And Other Sketches* by Susie Frances Harrison
CBS	*Carried by Storm* by May Agnes Fleming
FBM	*The Forest of Bourg-Marie* by Susie Frances Harrison
FM	*Fated to Marry* by May Agnes Fleming
KD	*Kate Danton; or the Captain's Daughters* by May Agnes Fleming
LPV	*Later Poems and New Villanelles* by Susie Frances Harrison
LR	*The Last Robin: Lyrics and Sonnets* by Ethelwyn Wetherald
LS	*Lyrics and Sonnets* by Ethelwyn Wetherald
LW	*Lost for a Woman* by May Agnes Fleming
POP	*Penelope and Other Poems* by Susie Frances Harrison
PRF	*Pine, Rose, and Fleur de Lis* by Susie Frances Harrison
SLL	*Songs of Love and Labor* by Susie Frances Harrison
TS	*Tangled in Stars* by Ethelwyn Wetherald

"Unheard Niagaras": Literary Reputation, Genre, and the Works of May Agnes Fleming, Susie Frances Harrison, and Ethelwyn Wetherald

I Introduction: From Recovery to Appreciation

May Agnes Fleming (1840-80), Susie Frances Harrison (1859-1935), and Agnes Ethelwyn Wetherald (1857-1940) were all Canadian-born authors who wrote between 1860 and 1935. Each of them enjoyed some degree of literary prominence in their day, but they are all virtually forgotten in Canadian literature today. None of their works is currently in print, nor have they been for almost a century.[1] Gender, nationality, and history link the three writers, but I have selected them for this study not for their similarities so much as for their distinctiveness. They created and managed their public, literary reputations in order to publish their ideas, which presented very different attitudes toward gender roles, nationalism, and sexuality, and they voiced these attitudes in different genres. Each one is a case study in nineteenth- and early twentieth century English-Canadian women writers, but by juxtaposing them I intend to indicate a breadth of purpose and accomplishment that is, I believe, little appreciated in popular perceptions and not much more in professional and academic circles.

By examining the rhetorical strategies used both in writing and in managing their public careers, we better understand early Canadian literature for three women writers of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Also, the ideologies of the time—in terms of gender, nationalism, and sexuality—are brought to light. Understanding the dominant ideologies of the day allows us to see how Fleming, Harrison, and Wetherald were at once constrained by and yet pushed beyond the socio-cultural limitations of the time. Primary sources—their works—reveal their accomplishment, but secondary sources are necessary to understand how that accomplishment was viewed by their contemporaries. Through their public reputations, as documented in articles, their letters and public interviews, we see how they fashioned their reputations as well as how they were critically seen by others. Reputation can enhance or deflate public reception, and for all of them, the management of the public life reveals the barriers they faced in developing reputations as early Canadian writers. Scholars in other influential, national literatures of England and the United States have made a concerted effort to go back and read, analyze, assess, and criticize women writers of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries because they were marginalized, and there has also been a movement in this direction in Canadian literature. While it is fair to say that early women writers remain for the most part obscure and unknown outside of academic circles in Canada, this study chooses three academically "recovered" Canadian women writers in the hopes that viewing them side by side will provide a perspective on what their works reveal about them, and about the sociocultural climate in which they lived. They contributed to our literary history at the moment of their currency, sometimes significantly, as we shall see, and it is worthwhile to try to gain some notion of their weight by viewing them together.

The excavation work of such critics as Carole Gerson, Lorraine McMullen, Germaine Warkentin, Gwendolyn Davies, Carrie MacMillan, Elizabeth Waterston, Sandra Campbell, Mary Jane Edwards, James Doyle, Misao Dean, Heather Murray, Cecily Devereux, and others, has been invaluable to this project. These critics have recuperated the biographies and bibliographies of early Canadian women writers and begun both reprinting their works and engaging critically with them. Now that we know who they are and what they wrote, the time has come for us to look into their works, and to ask the provocative questions. For example, my examination has led to questions about cultural marketing and literary production. The examination of gender has similarly led to further questions in feminist materialism, sexism and sexuality. I will be centrally concerned with what these writers chose as subjects, what genres they chose to structure their expressions, and, in as much as possible, why they made those choices. As "the debate about canons has become a debate about the nature of history, society, and culture," as Robert Lecker says (5), critics must seek new ways to examine and define literary merit. Recovering lost works by women writers and developing arguments for the re-conception of the Canadian literary canon begins with re-reading.

Each chapter begins with the author's biography. In seeking out the letters and family lore of Harrison and Wetherald through archives and interviews with descendants, I began to piece together some of their motivations for writing, and their difficulties and arguments with sexism and provincialism in the Canadian writing scene. As Wetherald says, in a letter to William Wilfred Campbell, "*I* think it was the muse that jilted me. I'm strongly of the opinion that in this country at least she has shown a decided preference for adorers of the other sex,"[2] thus drawing attention to what she sees as the more favourable reception of works by men as compared to women in late nineteenth-century Canada (6 December 1892). Similarly, Harrison expresses her frustration with the harder choice of remaining in Canada unlike fellow writers of the same period who fled to the United States. She writes to a critic, "What is the use of doing or trying to do good work, when gladly one will shake the dust of Canada off one's feet and go somewhere where 'Canadian Literature' is not known!" (Harrison letter to Hathaway 23 February 1916).[3] While the archival research had already been done on Fleming, in bringing to the forefront the controversial, even revolutionary, treatment of her husband in her will, and viewing that alongside the recurrent problematic of marriage in her domestic novels, it is impossible to overlook the courageous message to women that marriage can, without quiet insistence and a sense of equality, be a trap. All three of these writers had something to say, something they hoped might strike a chord and get them a hearing, and, incidentally, something that might bring them, and potentially Canada, some measure of literary success.

Women and men did not compete for literary success on equal terms. In nineteenth-century American literature, *separate spheres* "is a metaphor that has been used by scholars to describe a historically constituted ideology of gender relations that holds that men and women occupy distinct social, affective, and occupational realms" (Davidson and Hatcher 7). Because of the distinctive, gendered positions, the genres acceptable and accessible for each gender, as an example, were virtually segregated, and men, with greater social and vocational mobility, had considerably more options than women in terms of writing styles and, arguably, publishing opportunities. In the past twenty-five years, critics such as Sandra Gilbert, Susan Gubar, Elaine Showalter, Cathy Davidson, Alicia Ostriker, Joanne Russ, among others, have developed separate-spheres criticism in the context of American literature. They examine the division between the public working world of men and the private domestic world of women. "[Scholars] insist that not only was nineteenth-century American society organized around the model of the separate spheres," Cathy

Davidson and Jessamyn Hatcher write, "but also that the female sphere of sentiment, home, and hearth suddenly became a source of great national value, pride, and inspiration" (7). Separate spheres criticism has established an exclusionary, gender-divided literary history in the United States,[4] whereby women writers were discriminated against in terms of what was considered acceptable for them to write, how they wrote, and how they were received and criticized. Within the constraints of convention, women writers sometimes managed to find ways to reach other women through literature and the imagination, and they sometimes raised questions that they hoped would lead to social change. Separate spheres criticism pertains no less to Canadian literature, which shared the prevailing gender roles, prejudices, and attitudes in North America when Canada's literary industry was in its infancy.

Gender discrimination in Canada's literary history has perhaps been overshadowed by contending nationalisms—British, French, and American, primarily—that further complicate how early English-Canadian writers have been read. The question of nationalism pervades early Canadian literature and Canadian literary history in general. "To find the literature was to find the country," Leon Surette and Robert Lecker affirm, "and to find successive works of literature that embodied the nationalist ideal was, in effect, to discover the solidity of the nation's existence in time" (Lecker 9). Thus literature and the development of nationalist ideals have traditionally been seen as interdependent. As early as 1853, Susanna Moodie,[5] a British immigrant to Canada, wrote, "Has Canada no poet to describe the glories of his parent land—no painter that can delineate her matchless scenery of land and wave? Are her children dumb and blind, that they leave to strangers the task of singing her praises?" (Moodie, "Early" 8). Moodie's questions evoke a common perception in the mid-nineteenth century, that Canada had no literature of its own, except what was being written about it by writers from other countries. Such a notion hardly seems unusual in hindsight, given that Canada was a colony of Britain, and many of its early writers in English were British immigrants. However, Moodie's ideas speak of a mid-nineteenth-century national crisis: who will sing the praises, record the history, and imagine the possibilities of Canada, and furthermore, who will be able to read it?

By the late nineteenth century, Canadian writers had been examining and fostering the literary possibilities in Canada. The opening paragraph of William Douw Lighthall's introduction to his 1889 poetry anthology *Songs of the Great Dominion: Voices from the Forests and Waters, the Settlements and Cities of Canada*, published 36 years after Moodie posed her questions, shows not only how literary Canadians had evolved, but even takes a large step toward the opposite extreme. In Lighthall's view:

> The poets whose songs fill this book are voices cheerful with the consciousness of young might, public wealth, and heroism. [...] The tone of them is *courage*;–for to hunt, to fight, to hew out a farm, one must be a man! Through their new hopes, doubts, exultations, questionings, the virility of fighting races is the undertone. Canadians are, for the most part, the descendants of armies, officers and men, and every generation of them has stood up to battle. (xxi)

Lighthall fills his description with stereotypical imagery of strength that is used in so much early Canadian literature: "Through them, taken all together," he says, "you may catch something of great Niagara falling, of brown rivers rushing with foam, of the crack of a rifle in the haunts of the moose and caribou" (xxi). He describes the plight of the early Canadian asserting his will against native and outside influences, war, and the land. His remarks are also clearly gendered, culminating in his masculinist cry that "[o]ne must be a man!" to have the courage for living in and writing about such an existence. His description is patently self-aggrandizing, gender-exclusive bravado. There is a pride in Canada, Lighthall suggests, and only the brightest and bravest men can and have dared to write about it. However, by the end of the nineteenth century, there was little of that bravado in evidence. In newly-established Canadian periodicals, further discussed in Chapter Two, authors debated how best to achieve a distinctly Canadian literature, and one of the most common solutions was by leaving Canada for the bigger, international publishing markets of New York and London. These authors were not reluctant to let readers know that they were, as Sara Jeannette Duncan put it, "still an eminently unliterary people" (Duncan "Saunterings," 707).[6]

II Evaluation and Appreciation

Canada was, of course, more complicated linguistically and culturally than the United States. Because Canadian literature developed simultaneously in English and French, and because of Canada's colonial history and the competing cultural influences on it, its literary history had to accommodate pluralism for which there was no American counterpart. It should not be surprising, then, that approaches to early Canadian literature are fraught with difficulties and contradictions. It took several decades before we could take the view expressed by Northrop Frye, in his "Conclusion" to the *Literary History of Canada* (1965):

> [Literary historians] have completely outgrown the view that evaluation is the end of criticism, instead of its incidental by-product. Had evaluation been their guiding principle, this book would, if written at all, have been only a huge debunking project, leaving Canadian literature a poor naked *alouette* plucked of every feather of decency and

> dignity. True, the book gives evidence, on practically every one of its eight hundred odd pages, that what is really remarkable is not how little but how much good writing has been produced in Canada. But this would not affect the rigorous evaluator. The evaluative view is based on the conception of criticism as concerned mainly to define and canonize the genuine classics of literature. And Canada has produced no author who is a classic in the sense of possessing a vision greater in kind than that of his best readers (Canadians themselves might argue about one or two, but in the perspective of the world at large the statement is true). (821)

Frye's conclusion is to avoid seeking absolute literary value from Canada's early writers, and instead, even though it might be "deplored by Canadians," to appreciate, perhaps even to treasure, the contributions to cultural history and the developing literary imagination of Canada (821-22). His viewpoint is one I have tried to adhere to in my readings of Fleming, Harrison, and Wetherald.

"The new subindustry of early Canadian literary studies," Nick Mount writes, "is torn between its nonevaluative, cultural-historian agenda and its disciplinary desire to claim a special status for certain products of that cultural history" (78-79). The difficulty that bedevils most scholars of early Canadian literature, as Mount rightly points out, is the desire to find literature of international status and irrefutable merit. Yet, as W. J. Keith writes, "Evaluation is an uncomfortable topic, as well as a risky procedure, because literary judgements can never be established in terms that will satisfy a strictly scientific mind" (395). If a prior critical trend in early Canadian literature was to ask "Where is here?" as Frye did, then I suggest the current trend is to ask "What is good?" Keith sees the overriding critical difficulty with early Canadian literary criticism in the critics themselves: without objective (scientific) criteria, "they could not tell the difference between the excellent and the third-rate" (395). Mount supports Frye's initiative, even while conceding that scholars in early Canadian literature have, as a consequence, taken up the task of becoming cultural historians instead of literary critics. As Mount puts it, "There is no shame in not having a literature; there is in inventing one" (93). Yet perhaps there *is* shame in having no literature—or, at least, in not having a literature in which one can take pride. Rather than being embarrassed by Canada's early literature, we should go beyond asking what is there, and consider why the authors might have taken on the topics they did. Surely there is literary value in the socio-cultural questions of how and why writers wrote what they did at a particular time.

"Yes, there is a Canadian literature," writes Douglas Lochhead, in the 1970s, in his Preface to the University of Toronto Press series "Literature of Canada: Poetry and Prose in Reprint." In the last quarter of the twentieth century, there was a move to establish Canada's early literature by making its texts available for students and scholars and Lochhead's Preface was printed in each edition. He wrote:

> It does exist. Much of this literature has been long out of print. If the country's culture and traditions are to be sampled and measured, both in terms of past and present-day conditions, then the major works of both our well-known and our lesser-known writers should be available for all to buy and read. The Literature of Canada series aims to meet this need. It shares with its companion series, The Social History of Canada, the purpose of making the documents of the country's heritage accessible to an increasingly large national and international public, a public which is anxious to acquaint itself with Canadian literature—the writing itself—and also to become intimate with the times in which it grew. ("Preface" v)

Lochhead's main point is hard to argue against. How can we know what there is in early Canadian literature if we do not read it? Why should we take the word of literary critics who denounce it? Given gender and racial discrimination, for example, do we not risk perpetuating early prejudices *unless* we read early Canadian literature to discover what makes up our country's literary imagination? Somehow, the need for Lochhead to affirm the very existence of a Canadian literature shows the extent to which it had been lost from the historical record, and perhaps the inferiority complex that drove it underground. "Perhaps there will never be a Canadian canon," suggests Dermot McCarthy, "but only a tradition of canonic anxiety" (45).

What becomes evident is this sense of early Canadian literature as a marginalized, inferior literary industry that has prevailed in criticism since the early twentieth century. Such a checkered history makes us ask what happens to the development and progression of a national literature so willing to denounce and forget its forebears, and so willing to accept its marginal status. I hope, in this study, to show that there are works of interest—historic, generic, topical—in Canada's early literature.

Canadian literature developed into a scholarly field of its own in the second half of the twentieth century. The launching of the New Canadian Library (NCL) series, edited by Malcolm Ross and published by McClelland and Stewart, which began in 1957, helped to establish and make accessible a Canadian literature (Spadoni and Donnelly 16). By 1985, the NCL series had 186 titles in print. The Centre for Editing Early Canadian Texts (CEECT) at Carleton University began in 1985 and also helped to make a wider selection of early Canadian texts available. The Canadian government took part, along with publishers and universities, by funding the

Canadian Institute for Historical Microreproductions (CIHM), which has preserved a large selection of early Canadian literature in microtext format, and has made it publicly available both in libraries and over the internet through the Early Canadiana Online website (<http://www.canadiana.org>).

Valuable as the material recuperation of early Canadian texts is, however, both Mount and Keith point to inadequacies in both the critical apparatus and the marketing strategies evident in the introductions and afterwords supporting the texts. Mount says:

> [T]hese recurring evaluative gestures are symptomatic of nineteenth-century Canadianists' nagging discontent with our accepted role as cultural historians—with, specifically, cultural history's forgiveness of the evaluative component traditionally central to our discipline, and with its attendant lesser claim on the public's attention ("This is a good book" presumably has a broader base of appeal than "This is a good example of imperialist discourse"). (84)

As scholars and critics of early Canadian literature, the question recurs: can we bridge the gap between what is good and what is valuable in literature by admitting that the early literature leaves us wanting from a literary-critical perspective, but that by examining it through the lens of cultural history there is far more to be read there? I regard my study of these three Canadian women as an attempt at affirming this position.

III Double Bind: Trivial or Second-Rate

I now turn to the history of early Canadian women writers more specifically. While scholarship in nineteenth-century Canadian literature gained currency throughout the twentieth century, scholarship specifically on women's writing remained relatively uncommon. This imbalance was not predictable from contemporary assessments of the relative accomplishments of men and women. Further in his 1889 introduction, W.D. Lighthall mentions the colony's "strength in lady singers." "The number who have produced true poetry," he writes, "seems to indicate something special in the conditions of a new country"[7] (xxxii).

Lighthall was not alone in declaring that women writers held a leading place in Canadian literature. Yet Carole Gerson shows that the notion received lip service without serious backing: "This practice of conferring stardom on one or two representative women writers while neglecting the rest [is] significant when we examine the practices of Canadian anthologists" ("Anthologies" 55). Gerson's study of early Canadian anthologies shows that, in spite of the "self-replicating tendency of academic anthologies," women writers were consistently omitted and/or removed from anthologies, and therefore from easy access by the greatest number of readers.

In a separate article on canon formation, Gerson suggests a reason for such widespread omissions: "women's writing was expected to conform to a Romantic/sentimental/domestic model. Those who followed suit and did not practise modernism were then easily dismissed and have disappeared from sight, while those who engaged with modernist methods were seldom taken as seriously as their male counterparts and have been consistently under-represented in the canon" ("Canon" 55). In other words, the women faced a double bind: write domestic romance and be judged trite, or write in the modernist style and be judged second-rate. Either way, women were doomed to be overlooked. Twentieth-century scholars such as Ralph Gustafson and A.J.M. Smith read the earlier generation of writers with disdain, and gender discrimination relegated women to the bottom of the heap. Early Canadian women writers simply vanished from view. Once writers were omitted from an anthology, they almost never reappeared. These editorial decisions influenced not only subsequent anthologies, but also had the effect of removing them from the historical record. Academic critics and anthologists only one or two generations after them never heard their names.

Carrie MacMillan has provided evidence for the rather startling rapidity of the dismissal. She says:

> A factor that tended to devalue women's writing was what recent feminist critics describe as the link between gender and judgement, the tendency to assess women's writing as trivial. These conditions were exacerbated for all writers of the nineteenth century by the modernist movement in the 1920s, which tended to dismiss all writing that did not subscribe to its tenets. Not only are there few materials extant from the period, but many of the basic biographical "facts" of the authors' lives are inaccurate, particularly dates of death. This suggests that, even if a woman writer enjoyed some success during her active publishing career, she was rather quickly forgotten. ("Research," 49)

Since Gerson and MacMillan have written about the loss of early Canadian women writers, some publications including them or dedicated specifically to their works have been printed, although progress is slow.

In 1990, Lorraine McMullen published a collection of essays *Re(dis)covering Our Foremothers: Nineteenth-Century Canadian Women Writers*, that was based on a conference held in 1988. This collection renewed the field of early Canadian feminist recovery by bringing together the expertise of many scholars who had been working in the field and gathering their disparate research in one place. It led to the publication by editors Lorraine McMullen and Sandra Campbell of three collections of short stories by early Canadian women. In their introduction to *Aspiring Women: Short Stories by Canadian Women 1880-1900*, McMullen and Campbell consider that while "women writers have long been associated with the development of the country's literature," early English-Canadian women writers continue to be best known in academic circles, if at all (2). They acknowledge, like Lighthall a century earlier, that pioneering writers Susanna Moodie and Catherine Parr Traill[8] are Canada's best-known early women writers even though (or perhaps because) they are native Britons.

For early Canadian women writers, one common exigency for averting (or escaping) prejudices was the assumption of a pseudonym that, as McMullen and Campbell point out, "often presented shields of masculinity or fervent patriotism that veiled the complex women behind them"(*Aspiring* 1). Early women writers wanted to be taken seriously, and one way was by making their patriotism readily apparent to their readers. Being taken seriously also meant masking their sex. They could accomplish both, at least superficially, by using intellectual, gender-neutral pseudonyms like "Fidelis" (Agnes Maule Machar), and "Seranus" (Susie Frances Harrison), or male pseudonyms like "Gilbert King" (Susie Frances Harrison, on her musical compositions) and "Garth Grafton" (Sara Jeannette Duncan).

Marjory Lang has shown that early Canadian women could earn a living writing journalism, which explains the propensity for early women journalists who had the opportunity to "break through" and to earn a place for themselves in the writing world through journalism.[9] Both Harrison and Wetherald worked as journalists and earned reputations from journalism as well as writing fiction and poetry. McMullen and Campbell single them out as writers who strove for equality in writing: "Poems and stories were a more perilous financial proposition. In the cases of writers like Ethelwyn Wetherald and Susan Frances Harrison, one suspects that if poetry and fiction had offered financially viable careers in nineteenth-century Canada, they might have devoted themselves almost exclusively to *belles-lettres*" (*Aspiring* 3). In fact, both Wetherald and Harrison gave up journalism in order to write literature exclusively later in their lives. Their reasons for doing so are different, but they speak to their aspirations as writers of literature, and their willingness to endure material sacrifices and a measure of insecurity to achieve it.

In 1992, Carrie MacMillan, Lorraine McMullen and Elizabeth Waterston published *Silenced Sextet: Six Nineteenth-Century Canadian Women Novelists*. They present the biographies and briefly summarize and analyze some of the fiction written by six early Canadian women: Rosanna Mullins Leprohon, May Agnes Fleming, Margaret Murray Robertson, Susie Frances Harrison, Margaret Marshall Saunders, and Joanna E. Wood. McMullen, MacMillan, and Waterston have been important in the study of early English-Canadian women writers through both their archival research in uncovering the writers and their synopses in summarizing their works. Yet the need to go beyond recovery and to explore the works contextually, rhetorically, and retrospectively is clear. My study of Fleming, Harrison, and Wetherald endeavours to engage with those issues by examining certain selected works that seem, as I will show, to provide insights into their art and their ambitions. Where possible, I augment the biographies of the women writers, but in coming to grips with their works, I hope to provide a perspective on their contributions to cultural history through the social and political dynamics represented in their works.

This study issues from a simple question: once these authors have been "found," where do we go from there? I look at three early Canadian women writers who have been found and examine selections of their works in detail, and consider the ways in which their works reflect, react against, and imagine beyond nineteenth-century Canadian ideologies of gender, sexuality, nation, and genre. Their works, I hope to show, need not be treated like outdated relics. Today, there are literary, nationalist, and feminist reasons for re-reading these writers.

As with most projects involved in the recovery of early Canadian literature, one of the difficulties is the question of literary value. In her essay "'But is it any *good*?': Evaluating Nineteenth-Century American Women's Fiction," Susan K. Harris provides a useful methodology for returning to early women's texts. She raises questions both "functional and historical" for asking what purpose early women's texts served for their contemporary audience, how the structure of the text lent itself to the purpose of the work, and what "power of fascination" the text holds (270). Harris' position helps to articulate my purpose in the present study:

> Because we have admitted that our endeavor is ideological, we can evaluate the novels in terms of their contribution to the expansion of women's possibilities (i.e. politically), as well as for the degree of power with which they present their subjects. For the novels to be published and favorably reviewed, they had to conform to the strictures articulated above [what needs the works served for their readers; whether they express a "spiritual truth" of women's aspirations; whether they gave hope to their readers; what effects the text's structures had on its themes; what kinds of emotional or cognitive discrepancies exist; whether the text holds the same power of fascination today as when it was written]; for them to achieve their 'subversive' objects, they had to find a form that would embody these dual, often contradictory, ideas. [...] Another set of evaluative criteria, then, lies in determining how well the texts strike the balance between socially and textually created ideological imperatives. (270-71)

By examining the works of early Canadian women writers from an ideological perspective, with contextual information about literary trends, we move away from questions of literary value based on current or critical tenets and pre-ordained trends, and we can see more clearly the kinds of rhetorical purposes Fleming, Harrison, and Wetherald were pursuing.

The question of whether or not early women writers were subversive—either by the very act of wielding the pen, or by the subjects they engaged in their writing—is a recurrent one. Carole Gerson concludes *A Purer Taste: The Writing and Reading of Fiction in English in Nineteenth-Century Canada* (1989) by suggesting that "incurring the wrath of the public was the last thing most nineteenth-century Canadian writers had in mind. Far from challenging their society, these writers shared and stabilized its values. They regarded their proper place as the mainstream, not the forefront (or underground) of artistic and social thought" (153). While I agree with Gerson's assessment, I suggest that Fleming, Harrison, and Wetherald used the aesthetic familiarity of genre to write within acceptable and accessible mainstream fashion, while in the subject matter of their writings, they challenged certain ideologies of the period.

IV Gender and Genre

Donna Bennett's definition of genre in "Conflicted Vision: A Consideration of Canon and Genre in English-Canadian Literature" provides a useful conception of genre as a dynamic or developing categorization of literary works, the sense in which I will use it:

> The ability of a reader to identify a given work as belonging to a genre depends on his [or her] sense that certain complete texts are perceptibly similar in underlying structures, despite variations in subject, character, and setting. [...] But even though genres exist only by agreement, they are not static constructs. Governed by reception of individual texts, they are subject to continual incremental change, as well as, at times, to large alterations. (132)

There is a slipperiness to the term "genre," as should be expected with any theoretical notion that defines complexes of content and structure, because they are intrinsically dynamic. In his introduction to *Modern Genre Theory* (2000), David Duff finds that because a specific genre of literature will be popular at one time and unpopular at another, the uses of the genre reveal clues about the fashions and tastes of the time and add a contextual level of understanding to a text's overall social, cultural, and political message. There is, as Duff points out, a modern, critical resistance to genre: "Even when there is no mention of 'rules' or 'conventions' ([genre's] usual corollary), the term seems almost by definition to deny the autonomy of the author, deny the uniqueness of the text, deny spontaneity, originality and self-expression" (1). Yet it is this quality of a form that is established, conventional, reliable, or (to go back to the root meaning) generic, that gives genre its fundamental status because it is an immediate way of appealing to, or reaching, an audience.

Fleming, Harrison, and Wetherald used specific genres that conformed with contemporary tastes, and I will show that such deliberate "belonging" to a genre allowed them to take up themes and ideas that were unconventional and sometimes (though guardedly) beyond contemporary taste. Within different genres, they were able to write about political or social reorganization, and still appear to remain within the conventional boundaries established by the genre itself and accepted by society in general. By manipulating genre in this way, as I will show, they are both participating in a genre, and expanding it, by causing a shift in the discourse allowed or explored within it.

"A society chooses and codifies the acts that correspond most closely to its ideology," Tzvetan Todorov writes, and he continues:

> [T]hat is why the existence of certain genres in one society, and their absence in another, are revelatory of that ideology, and allow us to establish it more or less confidently. It is not a coincidence that the

> epic is possible in one period, the novel in another, with the individual hero of the novel opposed to the collective hero of the epic: each of these choices depends upon the ideological framework within which it operates. (200)

Thus, Todorov clarifies the relationship between genre and literary traditions. Genre takes on the social role of reflecting current ideologies. In this sense, Fleming, Harrison, and Wetherald rely on the traditions of genre as an established form, as well as on the genre's reflection of acceptable or conventional social ideologies, but they understand, as artists, that genres are *not* fixed forms, and so they manipulate the characteristics of a specific genre to convey less conventional messages within the conventional framework. Couched in acceptable or popular genres, these unconventional viewpoints on gender, nationalism, and sexuality become acceptable public discourse. In this way, they would not "incur the wrath of the public," as Gerson says, and they could still imagine something better than the social and ideological structures (or strictures) in place for them at the time.

By representing social criticism and imagining beyond the limited sociocultural roles acceptable for women of the period within easily recognized genres, Fleming, Harrison, and Wetherald abided by the literary codes of nineteenth-century Canada while at the same time, as I will show, dramatizing characters and situations against established social institutions. Through their literature, they imagine new or at least more flexible social and cultural values. In her work on gender and genre, Mary Eagleton explains sexual bias in literature: "literary history privilege[s] the male-dominated forms. High tragedy, epic poetry, sermons, the philosophical treatise, criticism carry more kudos than journals, letters, diaries, even, for the most part, fiction—forms in which women have proliferated" ("Genre" 252). Essentially, private writing is categorized as the "feminine" literary tradition and has typically been considered secondary; whereas the "masculine" literary tradition is considered more complex and ambitious, and therefore carries more cultural and political power. Eagleton says "the female forms, we have been told, are less literary, less intellectual, less wide-ranging, less profound" (252). Such generic distinctions, based on gender, are considered "ideologically bound" by feminist critics (Eagleton "Genre," 252). According to Eagleton, gendered and generic divisions are not arbitrary, but instead are purposefully used to establish and maintain "women's place" either by confining women to writing within specific genres, or by ignoring women's writing that falls into the "masculine" genres.

One objective of feminist criticism has been to recover the more personal or private genres written by women to "hear" their voices. One objective in this study is to examine the genres used by Fleming, Harrison, and Wetherald, and to identify the kinds of discrimination they faced in writing within specific genres. Fleming wrote within the tradition of domestic fiction, probably the most common genre for women writers of the period; Harrison, more self-conscious in her literary aspirations, wrote in a number of genres usually with nation-building themes, including poetry, short stories, and novels; and Wetherald, after establishing a career in journalism, settled into conventional nature and love poetry. I show that Fleming, Harrison, and Wetherald used their literature to evoke social, political, and cultural opinions. While their works make mildly subversive gestures, being radical was not the intention or the accomplishment of any of the writers in this study. All three writers sought recognition for their works, and in order to write what would be acceptable and marketable to the public, they expressed their ideas in the socially conventional styles of their day.

V Gender and Genre in the Works of Three Women

May Agnes Fleming expressed antimarriage sentiments within her domestic fiction. Why? Her biography offers some answers, but her fiction takes place in settings where conventional gender roles and the limitations of marriage are the social norm. The way she presented herself, her professional image, and the ways in which she portrays gender in her novels, show that Fleming understood well the complexities of gender performance and the restrictions of gender. She played her role within those restrictions. But she imagines women in the act of taking radical steps to extricate themselves. By doing so, her fiction brings bold new ideas to the women who were her reading audience, and potentially arouses social awareness and the seeds of change.

Susie Frances Harrison often includes French-Canadians in her writings about Canada. (Her Canada includes Quebec—more explicitly than that of any of her contemporaries.) She creates stereotypical character sketches of French-Canadians in villanelles, and she writes about the French-Canadian historical point of view in her novels. Her overriding purpose, though never preached outright, is political and cultural. She seeks to forge an understanding of French Canada by English Canada, or she strives to meld Canadians into one, united ideal entity. It is clear that Harrison was not only aware of the fragmented political history and situation of the country, but also concerned that there was no clear vision of Canada as a national entity. Harrison wrote about Canada in all of her publications, perhaps to the detriment of her literary career, as it was not a theme that fanned enthusiasm for general readers, and her dedication to extolling pluralism is a positive view (and many years ahead of its time). If many of her ethnic characters were stereotypical, nonetheless she shows us how people thought about Canada, which in turn might help us to understand how we continue to think about it today. Do those stereotyped *habitants* and pushy Yankees still linger in the subconscious of Harrison's literary descendants?

At first glance, Wetherald's love poetry reads as fairly typical of the day, and her nature poetry is certainly remembered as such. Yet a closer reading reveals the inspiration for her best poems to be Helena Coleman, and their great affection for one another is revealed more openly in personal letters. Reading Coleman's love poetry reveals what I believe is a dialogue on love between the two writers. Critically, Wetherald's love poems were not given much credence in her day and have been neglected in her recovery. However, theories on sexuality shed light on the perceptions of love between women at the time, and apparently help to explain the critical gap in the reception of love poetry by women.

I have read a great deal more by these authors than I have discussed in the chapters that follow. Some of it, I freely admit, has not stood the test of time. Some of it has, however, and surely that is a discovery that is far and away the more surprising one, in light of the way they were ignored to the point of almost complete oblivion after their deaths.

Obviously, these three writers are very different, despite having gender, nationality, and literature in common. In examining Fleming, Harrison, and Wetherald, this study does not attempt to forge contrived connections between them, but rather, it gives a fuller picture of the literary world of early Canadian women writers by tracing their particular ways of proceeding, their personal predilections in literature, and above all their independence. So it is about a woman in a bad marriage crusading against the patriarchy in hopes of saving others from making the same mistake that she does. It is equally about a woman full of patriotic sentiment, intellectual rigour, and a love of Canadian culture who could not quite break through and impress the literary markets she courted. It is also about a woman in love with a fellow poet who was limited to that love's expression in subtle poems that disguised it in one sense but nuanced it for those who knew its sources. Their distinctiveness is, in my view, more important than their similarities, and it is intended to make my thesis a testament to the range of women's writing in the post-Confederation generation.

VI Unheard Niagaras, Now and Then

Fleming, Harrison, and Wetherald all felt constrained by gender and/or nationality at some point in their careers. That, of course, is a shared trait among them. Yet they persisted in writing, in spite of their "unheard niagaras"—that constant rushing of women's ideas that too easily got obscured by the white noise of the background. They were determined to voice what was in their hearts and minds, whether or not anyone was listening. Looking at their common struggles as they followed separate paths will reveal, I hope, a larger legacy of early Canadian literature by women.

To return to the question of cultural history, I would like this study to fill a few of the gaps between literary value and early Canadian literature. By revisiting and, where possible, adding new details to the biographies of Fleming, Harrison, and Wetherald, we begin to understand who these women were in the context of their time and what motivated them to write. In considering the genres they used and how they were genres both available to women writers in general and used by them specifically, we can further understand literary history and the social conditions under which women writers worked in order to make their voices heard. The content of their works and the social causes they championed show what I call, extending Wetherald's metaphor, "unheard niagaras," large but unspoken issues that needed voicing at a time when "the literary acknowledgment of social problems" in Canada was "rare" (Gerson Intro *RG*, xiii). Fleming, Harrison, and Wetherald reflect in their disparate ways problems they recognized in the larger framework of early Canada. At a time when gender roles were well-defined, when Canada as a nation was not yet mature even imaginatively, and when women's sexuality was closeted, there were plenty of issues for women to address in their fiction and poetry, but they could only address them discreetly, even covertly. In considering how each woman managed her public literary career, three very different personalities emerge, with three different literary agendas. Ultimately, re-reading early Canadian women writers makes us aware of the diversity in Canadian women's writing of the period, and it dramatizes for us, the way we were, and the way we imagine ourselves to be better.

VII Biographical Timelines

Finally, the table that follows lays out the essential chronological facts of the three writers' lives: birth, marriage, birth of children, publications and deaths, and a few other life events that have some bearing on their careers. Because I am dealing with three fairly complex lives that overlapped but hardly intersected, there are very few opportunities in the chapters below to make cross-references to the other writers. The overlapping chronologies are nevertheless relevant. One of my purposes in discussing these three women is to give a sense of the breadth of ambitions, aspirations and achievements that women writers engaged with in Canada's formative years. The timelines reveal the overlap in a simple graphic display. I made this table originally so that I would have checkpoints as I was developing the analyses, and I hope they will serve readers in the same way.

The timelines are also useful as a kind of snapshot of the three careers. For instance, they make it clear with a cursory glance that May Agnes Fleming had a meteoric career, with early successes including a story published in New York at age fifteen and steady annual production of long novels from 1870, when she was thirty, until her death ten years later. It is only slightly fanciful to imagine that she burned out. Susie Frances Harrison and Ethelwyn Wetherald, by contrast, lived long lives and spread out their literary productions in a much more temperate schedule. Harrison appears to follow what might be considered a normal career trajectory, if there can really be such a thing in the life of a poet. She showed precocious talent and published a few articles and poems at age fifteen, and then steadily gained competence through careful study and diligence. What does not translate on the chart, however, are her unpublished manuscripts and musical compositions, many of which were written in the 1870s and 80s. The result is that her most productive years on the timeline seem to appear in her maturity, and actually increased after she turned fifty. Really, those publications were small and hard-won for Harrison. Wetherald shows yet another pattern. She appears as a late developer, although she was a journalistic success before publishing her poetic voice in her late forties, and even then she proved to be a diffident author, publishing her poetry sparingly within a 25-year period though she attained the age of eighty-three.

So it is possible to see diversity and variation in these literary lives even from these chronological skeletons, at least superficially. The chapters that follow will search for the substance of those literary lives.

Table 1—Biographical Timelines

	May Agnes Fleming	Susie Frances Harrison	Ethelwyn Wetherald
1840	born November 14		
1856	publishes short story "The Last of the Mountjoys," in the *Sunday Mercury* (New York)		
1857			born April 26
1859		born February 24	
1868	• August 24, marries John Fleming, a boilermaker in Saint John • son Frederick born • signs exclusive contract with Philadelphia's *Saturday Night* weekly		
1869	publishes *The Heiress of Glengower, Estella's Husband, Sybilla's Marriage*		
1870	publishes *Lady Evelyn, Who Wins? A Love Story, The Mystery of Mordaunt Hall, Unmasked* • daughter Maude born	1870s —studies piano under Frederic Boscovitz; attended private school in Montreal; classes at McGill University, began writing musical compositions	1870s —studies at the Friends Boarding School, Union Springs New York, and at Pickering College, Ontario
1871	• publishes *Magdalen's Vow,* and *Which Will She Marry?* • daughter Agnes born		
1872	• publishes *A Wonderful Woman,* and *A Leap in the Dark or Wedded, Yet No Wife*		
1873	• publishes *Guy Earlscourt's Wife,* and *A Terrible Secret* • son Charles born		
1874	• publishes *Norine's Revenge* and *A Mad Marriage*	publishes articles and poetry *Canadian Illustrated News,* Rose-Belford's Canadian Monthly	sells first poem to *St. Nicholas Magazine* (New York)
1875	• publishes *One Night's Mystery; An Awful Mystery; The Dark Secret* • moves her family to Brooklyn, New York		
1876	• publishes *Kate Danton; or, Captain Danton's Daughters; Silent and True;Little Queen* • signs exclusive contract with *New York Weekly.* • draws up will excluding husband from bequest		
1877	publishes *Shaddeck Light*		
1878	publishes *Carried By Storm*		
1879	publishes *Lost for a Woman*	marries John William Frederick Harrison in Ottawa	
1880	March 24, May Agnes Fleming dies of Bright's Disease in New York	son Frederick born	
1881	*Fated to Marry* published posthumously		
1883		daughter Frances born	
1886	*The Actress' Daughter* published posthumously	• publishes *Crowded Out! and Other Sketches* • 1886-87, February-June	1886-89—journalist and editor for *The Globe*'s "Woman's World" section

		editor of *The Week*, as well as music reviewer; publishes the most poems in *The Week* in its 13 year run	
1887		• publishes *The Canadian Birthday Book;* • writes *Search for a Canadian* (never publishes)	• publishes *An Algonquin Maiden: A Romance of the Early Days of Upper Canada*, co-written with Graeme Mercer Adam
1891		publishes *Pine, Rose, and Fleur de Lis*	
1894			publishes more poems than any other poet in *Youth's Companion*
1896			editor of *The Ladies' Home Journal* (Philadelphia); assistant editor of *The World's Best Literature*
1898		publishes *The Forest of Bourg-Marie*	
1902			publishes *Tangled in Stars*
1904			publishes *The Radiant Road*
1905			co-edited *The Collected Poems of Isabella Valancy Crawford* with John Garvin, and wrote its introduction
1907			publishes *The Last Robin: Lyrics and Sonnets*
1911			visits Pinehurst Island with Helena Coleman, Marjorie Pickthall and G. B. Lancaster.
1912		publishes *In Northern Skies and Other Poems*	visits Pinehurst Island again with Coleman, Pickthall, Lancaster and Agnes Maule Machar
1914		publishes *Ringfield*	officially adopts Dorothy
1921			publishes *Tree-Top Mornings*
1925		publishes *Songs of Love and Labor*	
1928		publishes *Later Poems and New Villanelles*	
1933		publishes *Four Ballads and a Play*	
1935		• publishes *Penelope and Other Poems* • May 5, Susie Frances Harrison dies in Toronto	
1940			March 9, Ethelwyn Wetherald dies in Chantler

Notes

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[1] This is especially true of May Agnes Fleming, whose novels have been out of print since the early twentieth century. Today, a few of Susie Frances Harrison's and Ethelwyn Wetherald's individual short stories and poems are included in collections focusing on women's writing, early Canadian writing, and as early selections in a chronological collection of Canadian short stories. Harrison has stories in *Short Stories by Canadian Women* edited by Rosemary Sullivan (1984), *The Oxford Book of Canadian Short Stories* edited by Margaret Atwood and Robert Weaver (1986), *Canadian Short Fiction* edited by W.H. New (1997), *Aspiring Women: Short Stories by Canadian Women 1880-1900* edited by Lorraine McMullen and Sandra Campbell (1993), *Early Canadian Short Stories* edited by Misao Dean (2000), and *Fiction: A Pocket Anthology* edited by R.S Gwynn and Wanda Campbell (2004). In Carole Gerson's article "Anthologies and the Canon of Early Canadian Women Writers," she acknowledges "Harrison may now be re-entering the canon through the door of fiction" with one story that appears in two recent short story anthologies" (64). That story is "Idyl of the Island" from *Crowded Out! And Other Sketches*, appearing in the Sullivan collection and in the Atwood and Weaver collection, and it further proves Gerson's point that an anthologist's choices get re-issued by other editors down the line, making those early writers who have been lost that much more difficult to find and to re-establish. Ethelwyn Wetherald's story "How the Modern Eve Entered Eden" (1882) is included in Lorraine McMullen and Sandra Campbell's collection *Aspiring Women: Short Stories by Canadian Women 1880-1900.* Both Susie Frances Harrison and Ethelwyn Wetherald have poems in *Canadian Poetry: From the Beginnings Through the First World War* edited by Carole Gerson and Gwendolyn Davies (1994) and in *Poetry: A Pocket Anthology* edited by R.S. Gwynn and Wanda Campbell (2004).

[2] I discuss what motivated this response further in Chapter Three on Ethelwyn Wetherald.

[3] This matter is explored in more detail in chapter two on Susie Frances Harrison.

[4] See Cathy N. Davidson and Jessamyn Hatcher, eds. *No More Separate Spheres! A Next Wave American Studies Reader* (Durham: Duke UP, 2002). See also Joyce W. Warren, ed. *The (Other) American Traditions: Nineteenth-Century Women Writers* (New Brunswick: Rutgers UP, 1993).

[5] Susanna Moodie lived from 1803-85. She was born Susanna Strickland, in Suffolk, England, one of six daughters, five of whom became writers. She wrote and published stories for children and adolescents, poems, sketches, and stories in England up to 1830. In 1831, she married Lt. John Wedderburn Dunbar Moodie, and in 1832 they immigrated to Canada (Peterman, "Moodie" 763-64). Moodie wrote about the gruelling pioneering experiences of a British immigrant to Canada in *Roughing It in the Bush* (1852) and in its sequel, *Life in the Clearings versus the Bush* (1853). She also wrote articles, stories, and poetry for the *Literary Garland* throughout its run from 1838-51, which helped to provide for her family, and gave her a literary outlet for which she longed.

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[6] Sara Jeannette Duncan lived from 1861-1922, and was thus a contemporary of Susie Frances Harrison and Ethelwyn Wetherald. According to Tausky, she was a journalist for the *Washington Post* in 1885-6, a columnist for the Toronto *Globe* in 1886-7, and for the *Montreal Star* from 1887-8 (Tausky 345). She also wrote for *The Week* during the 1880s. In 1888, Duncan set off on a world trip with a fellow journalist. She met her husband in India, and spent the rest of her life between India and London. She wrote about Canadian social, political, cultural, and literary issues with "intelligence, vigour, and wit" (Tausky 345). She wrote many collections of sketches and novels, and some of her later works use North America as a setting (Tausky 346). *The Imperialist* (1904) now appears on Canadian literature courses and is considered a classic Canadian novel of the period.

[7] He also attributes the beginnings of Canadian literature to Susanna Moodie, although, of her popular pioneering sketches, *Roughing It in the Bush*–which speak of the chaos of the untamed land, the classless society, and the treacherous isolation of arriving from civilized England to Canada–he writes in a parenthetical aside, "which book, by the way, did the country's progress a good deal of harm" (xxxiii).

[8] Catharine Parr Traill lived from 1802-99. She was Susanna Moodie's sister, one of the literary Strickland sisters from Suffolk, England, who, like Moodie became a pioneer to Canada, where she moved with her husband. She and her sister became pioneers of Canada's literary tradition, writing home about the immigrant's experience in Canada. Traill's most important book was *The Backwoods of Canada* (1836), but she also wrote *The Female Emigrant's Guide and Hints on Canadian Housekeeping* (1854), as well as books for children, and nature books such as *Canadian wild flowers* (1868) (Peterman "Traill,"1121-23). Traill's husband became increasingly desolate about their isolated lifestyle, and he suffered from depression. She was left to raise their seven surviving children, and to provide for them through the money she earned from her writing in their later years (Peterman "Traill," 1122-23).

[9] See Marjory Lang, "Separate Entrances: The First Generation of Canadian Women Journalists," in *Re(Dis)Covering Our Foremothers: Nineteenth-Century Canadian Women Writers*, ed. Lorraine McMullen (Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 1989), 77-90.

CHAPTER ONE

"Of Gentle Cast and Features": The Condition of Femininity in the Domestic Fiction of May Agnes Fleming

> I believe the established and time-honored precedent in writing stories is to bring the chief characters safely through sundry 'hair-breadth escapes by flood and field,' annihilate the vicious, make virtue triumphant, marry the heroine, and then, with a grand final flourish of trumpets, the tale ends.
>
> Now I hope none of my readers will be disappointed if in this "o'er true tale" I depart from this established rule. My heroine is married, but the history of her life cannot end here. Perhaps it would be as well if it could, but truth compels me to go on and depict the dark as well as the bright side of a fiery yet generous nature—a nature common enough in this world, subject to error and weakness as we all are, and not in the least like one of those angels oftener read of than seen.
>
> — May Agnes Fleming, *The Actress' Daughter* (1886)

In 1878, Canadian born writer May Agnes Fleming was interviewed in her New York home for *The World*, a New York newspaper. The author of the piece described for her readers the demeanour and appearance of Fleming in her home. "It was," she wrote,

> like "the best parlour" of the New England housewife, and the lady who presently stood in the room was not unlike the lady one would have expected to see there. She was tall—her height perhaps a little increased by the long morning wrapper in which she was dressed—and of gentle cast and features. Her face was pale, showing to better

> advantage the richness of auburn tresses, which she wore brushed well back from her forehead. In voice and manner, Mrs. Fleming confirms the opinion that her appearance forms. Her eyes are pale blue, and modestly seek the ground when she speaks, looking frankly into your face when she listens. ("Mrs. May Agnes Fleming" 5)

This description emphasizes Fleming's demure, almost passive femininity, and it was a persona very much in keeping with her domestic fiction. It also realized femininity in its classic enactment. As Judith Butler explains, "[g]ender is performatively produced,[…] constituting the identity it is purported to be. […] There is no gender identity behind the expressions of gender; that identity is performatively constituted by the very 'expressions' that are said to be its results" (24-25). To that end, there is a sense that the newspaper reporter is taking into consideration Fleming's presentation of self as part of the interview, and writing about her impression of it for her audience. Butler sees "the univocity of sex, the internal coherence of gender […] as regulatory fictions that consolidate and naturalize the convergent power regimes of masculine and sexist oppression," and in the newspaper account, Fleming seems to be abiding by such a fiction as I will explain (33).

It is not at all surprising that Fleming should be well aware of what constituted domestic behaviour and demeanour. She was a housewife, and mother of four, who wrote bestselling novels in her spare time. As such, Fleming welcomes a daily newspaper reporter into her home, and she presents herself, as the reporter notes, "not unlike the lady one would have expected to see there." That is, she presents herself as a dedicated housewife and mother whose home is well-kept and whose children are seen but not heard during the interview. She also downplays her success as a writer, acting as if it occurs by fortune or chance rather than by ambition and hard work. Among the gendered conventions in the interview are Fleming's modesty, as a woman "of gentle cast and features," who speaks only when spoken to, and listens intently when spoken to.

The management of her domestic image matters to Fleming because how she is publicly perceived affects the sales of her novels, and ultimately her family's financial future. Yet, ironically, in her novels, Fleming often examines and challenges the very condition of femininity she complies with in the newspaper's description of her. There is, then, a contradiction between Fleming's self-representation to the newspaper reporter and the representation of femininity she develops in her novels.

Fleming had to know and understand the power dynamics of what is referred to as "separate spheres" that delineated gender roles in nineteenth-century North America in order to challenge them so successfully. In *Desire and Domestic Fiction*, Nancy Armstrong writes that in the nineteenth century, "[g]ender was so clearly understood in oppositional terms that it could be graphically represented" in two columns, one labelled "Husband" and one labelled "Wife" where attributes such as "Gets goods" fall under "Husband" and "Gathers them and saves them" fall under "Wife" (18-19).[1] The proprieties of well-behaved, middle- and upper-middle-class femininity in the nineteenth century limited women's social mobility by making them the organizers of the home, and relegating them to the quiet, private domain. While gender ideology, as outlined by Butler, proves complex, Armstrong's binary categories provide a way to understand the rigid, gendered division in late nineteenth-century British, American, and Canadian social lives. Yet, there is another dimension. Misao Dean's study of early Canadian writing shows "femininity was (and is) its own kind of power, however limited, and [...] women grasped that power in order to construct themselves and to be constructed as authoritative" (*Practising* 10). Fleming's impression on the newspaper reporter suggests that she may or may not have been consciously 'acting' a certain feminine role, but she nevertheless understood what the public would want and expect of her. On the one hand, Fleming could be considered much like her readers, as a middle-class housewife, but on the other hand, she was living outside her prescribed gender role by earning the primary income to support her family through the public act of writing. Her self-representation as Mrs. Fleming, charming housewife and accidental writer, would help to promote her works because it assumed she lived within the conditions of femininity. To that end, the reporter comments on the absence of any visible indication of Fleming's work in the home she is welcomed into, and, as Lorraine McMullen says, "It seems that despite her success, Fleming's domestic identity took precedence at least publicly over her professional one, which was carefully hidden away" (*Silenced* 72). Fleming's role as housewife and mother is thus privileged above her role as writer, in an enactment of the gender conventions of the day. However, in the plots and characters of her fiction, Fleming creates women who break these very conventions, and she imagines women living successfully outside and beyond them—at least temporarily. The clash of private and public gendered spaces inhabited by Fleming is a useful, if not an essential way of considering her work.

It is also possible to read Fleming's works in terms of the standards created by the genre of domestic fiction in which she wrote. For Butler, gender is defined through the reiteration of the "stylization of the body" and "repeated acts within a regulatory frame that congeal over time to produce the appearance of substance, of a natural sort of being" (33). In Dean's words "femininity is a practice which must *be* practised, be repeated over and over again because it can never be done 'right,' can never materialize as a natural attribute of a material body. Because femininity can only be attributed to the fictional inner self whose existence it validates, we 'practise femininity'" (7). Fleming's image for the newspaper writer can be seen as a "practice" of femininity, and her representations of rebellion in her novels are yet another "practice" of femininity. The fact that they contradict one another shows the complexity of the notion of gender itself, even with the strictures placed on femininity in the nineteenth century. It further shows that, through her novels, Fleming is able to explore the condition of femininity in ways that she is unable to "practise" at home—or at least in front of a newspaper reporter who will present her image to her public.

In this chapter, I show that in Fleming's novels she conforms to the genre of conventional domestic novels, but that she also goes outside the conventions by moving her characters beyond the "happy ending" of a wedding, and into problematic marital relationships where she can expose and explore power dynamics between genders and classes. Overall, although Fleming appears to be abiding by the literary conventions of domestic fiction, she also resists—perhaps even challenges—the dominant ideology of gender in her novels. Fleming's novels take her women characters outside the domestic realm and into the workforce where they must independently create lucrative and safe opportunities for themselves. Fleming's heroines are strong, resourceful, and independent. They model gender equality within the formulaic marriage paradigm of domestic fiction making the content and form of Fleming's novels incongruous. Furthermore, this chapter shows Fleming's depiction of one troubled heroine who, in accepting the patriarchal social system, oppresses other women as she herself has been oppressed. Women may have been victims, but they needed to rebel to create change, and Fleming explores the risks and rewards of women's rebellion against patriarchy in her work.

I.i The Recovery of May Agnes Fleming

May Agnes Fleming has been academically revived by scholar and critic Lorraine McMullen who wrote the *Dictionary of Literary Biography* entry on Fleming in 1990, and in 1992 published a chapter on her in *Silenced Sextet: Six Nineteenth-Century Canadian Women Novelists*. While my research took me to a number of institutional archives and primary sources, I uncovered no completely new biographical information about Fleming. My biographical account of Fleming adds little to Lorraine McMullen's and is indebted to her research. My contribution to understanding the work of Fleming derives from my examination of the material conditions of her life, how they affected what she wrote and the genre she wrote in, and how she represents models of female independence within and beyond the limitations of nineteenth-century conventions in her novels.

Fleming was born May Agnes Early on November 14, 1840, in Saint John, New Brunswick. Her parents were Irish immigrants, and her father worked as a ship's carpenter in Saint John's harbour. Her mother gave birth to a succession of children who died in infancy, and May Agnes's only surviving sibling was a brother fourteen years her junior. At the age of fifteen, while she was still attending convent school, Fleming sent her first story, "The Last of the Mountjoys," to the *New York Mercury*,[2] where it was accepted for publication (McMullen *Silenced*, 52-55). "I received for it three little gold dollars which I treasure to this day," Fleming recalled in the newspaper interview quoted above, and she added:

> Of course, you may imagine that this encouragement acted like a spur. I did nothing but write, dividing the fruits of my labors between the *Mercury*, the *Boston Pilot*,[3] and the *Metropolitan Record*,[4] another New York story paper. I should probably have remained longer at school but for my success. 'Cousin May Carleton,' the name under which in those days I used to write, soon thought herself too fine for a school. ("Mrs. May Agnes Fleming" 5)

Fleming's Catholic upbringing and education influenced her choice of where to send her stories; all three of the magazines she lists were Catholic literary periodicals. In 1857, Fleming's Roman Catholic parish opened a school, and she was asked to be its first girls' teacher. Fleming taught for two or perhaps three years, until the success of her writing allowed her to leave teaching to pursue her writing career full time (McMullen *Silenced*, 56). By the age of seventeen, she had produced a novel and numerous stories. When she was nineteen, her fiction was being serially published in "story papers," periodicals in a newspaper format, and subsequently collected and published in inexpensive paperback novel format (McMullen, *Silenced* 55-56; 213).[5]

The reasons for Fleming's "remarkable success so early in life can be ascribed partly to timing," as McMullen says:

> The extension of education and expansion of literacy in the nineteenth century had led to a much wider reading public. More readers meant greater demand for reading material. As a result, the first great development of cheap paperback publishing began in the 1830s, and at the same time the story papers, as they were called, came into being. By mid-century, circulation of the story papers had expanded to the hundreds of thousands, and writers for them were much in demand. Often novels serialized in these papers were quickly republished in cheap paperback. (McMullen, *Silenced* 56)

Fleming was prolific. The New York Public Library cites thirty different titles by her, and one translation into German[6] (<http://www.nypl.org>). The U.S. Library of

Congress lists ten more titles by her. Fleming's work was published by several New York publishing houses including F. A. Brady in the 1860s, Carleton in the 1870s, G. W. Dillingham in the late 1880s, and Street and Smith in the 1880s and 1890s. In London, her fiction was published by S. Low and in Canada by Rose-Belford (<http://www.loc.gov/copyright>). The National Union Catalogue lists fifty-nine different titles under Fleming's authorship but the number is deceptive because the same novel was sometimes printed under more than one title.[7] In the United States, as domestic novels by women writers found their audience among the now-literate women, they increased in volume and prominence in magazines and literary publications. One result was "the Gentleman Publisher," as Susan Coultrap-McQuin calls them. "Those publishers and editors shared three aims," Coultrap-McQuin says:

> They sought to develop trusting, paternalistic, personal relationships with their authors; they claimed to have goals beyond commercial ones to advance culture and/or to provide a public service; and they assumed the role of moral guardian for their society. Although some would argue that those lofty aims were meant to mask competitive, capitalist motives, the evidence suggests that, while profit was never ignored by those who were trying to make a good living at publishing,

> the Gentleman Publisher's values often influenced respectable publishers' economic decisions. (34)

Fleming's relationships with her editors and publishers appear to have followed the above description, as I will show, in the contracts she received. Carole Gerson has shown that for early Canadian women, by the mid- to late nineteenth century, "rates for literary products were based on reputation rather than explicitly on gender. While women were implicitly excluded from the academic and political networks and honours that conferred a portion of an author's literary value, writing offered a fairer chance to achieve economic equality than teaching, for example, where a woman was lucky to earn half the salary of a man" ("Business" 91). Such discrepancies in pay neatly account for Fleming's decision to leave teaching to pursue her writing career, and also indicate how she would eventually sustain her family financially through her writing.

Church records and an item in the *New Brunswick Bibliography* show that May Agnes married John Fleming, a boilermaker, at the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception in Saint John, New Brunswick, on August 24, 1865. John Fleming had courted her for only three weeks before they married (McMullen, *Silenced* 63; 214). In the next eight years, May Agnes gave birth to four children: in 1868, she had a son, Frederick; two years later, she had a daughter, Maude. She and John had two more children, Agnes and Charles, by 1873. Through it all, Fleming continued to write prolifically, and she established herself as a popular writer for American and British periodical publications, as well as a widely read writer of domestic novels.

Before 1868, she signed contracts with the *New York Mercury*, Philadelphia's *Saturday Night*[8] and the *London Journal*.[9] Fleming's stories for the *Mercury* "grew longer and longer," and in order to supply new stories for the two other papers, she found herself writing "day and night" ("Mrs. May Agnes Fleming" 5). In 1868, she was offered a contract to write exclusively for Philadelphia's *Saturday Night*. McMullen explains Fleming's decision and the publication's history:

> [T]he Philadelphia *Saturday Night* [...] had been established only in 1865 and was looking for successful writers to build up its readership. By 1868, the time of Fleming's first appearance in the paper, its circulation had reached at least one hundred thousand, and it maintained one of the largest circulations of any American weekly. It had the usual story-paper format, consisting of eight pages, usually running three serials and several short stories. At this time payment to writers varied widely from paper to paper and from writer to writer. [...] Fleming's agreement with *Saturday Night* was to write three stories annually at $666.66 each, or $2000 annually, an excellent

> contract for that time, which made it well worth her while to give up her other magazine writing. It [also] took away some of the pressure of deadlines. (*Silenced* 64)

With so much work in print, issues of copyright plagued Fleming, and the reporter who interviewed her in 1878 ends the article with this plea: "Mrs. Fleming asked with great earnestness if there was no way by which she could be protected from the pirates in Canada, who are republishing all her books and offering them for sale there at ridiculous prices" ("Mrs. May Agnes Fleming" 6).

However, one copyright issue worked in Fleming's favour. *Saturday Night* was the only magazine publishing Fleming's works serially, and they arranged for the *London Journal* to publish them overseas simultaneously, for which Fleming got paid twelve pounds per week (McMullen, *Silenced* 68-69). When the *London Journal* published Fleming's serialized novel *The Heiress of Glengower* under the title *The Sister's Crime*, "several New York story papers began reprinting it, not realizing that it had already been published in an American paper and thus was protected by copyright."[10] *Saturday Night* took out "an injunction prohibiting continued publication" (McMullen, *Silenced* 68). The disruption of publication of the serial led to a contract "bidding war" for Fleming's writing (McMullen, *Silenced* 68). In 1876, the *New York Weekly*,[11] owned by paperback publishers Francis S. Street and Francis

S. Smith, and boasting "the largest circulation of any paper at this time," offered Fleming a contract, and she agreed to write exclusively for them (*Silenced* 69). As McMullen shows, this contract put Fleming in the ranks of some of the best-known American writers: "[w]hen Fleming was writing for the *Weekly*, it was one of two leading story papers. Its rival, the *New York Ledger*, edited by Robert Bonner,[12] also recruited famous writers, including Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, [...] Harriet Beecher Stowe, [...] and E.D.E.N. Southworth[13]" (McMullen, *Silenced* 69). Bonner was a self-made man who ran the *New York Ledger* from 1855 until his death in 1899. He was a product of his time: a strict moral Christian, who became a multi-millionaire through publishing, and who offered authors substantial contracts while always profiting himself (Coultrap-McQuin 69-70).

As Fleming's career flourished, her personal life unravelled. By all accounts, Fleming's marriage was an unhappy one. John Fleming is remembered as "an intemperate man who made life extremely difficult for his family" (McMullen, *Silenced* 71). In a sense, the literary success and the marriage failure were linked. John Fleming was unable to provide adequately for his family, and his inadequacy in this regard is one reason that Fleming continued to write and to promote herself in America. Fleming "was now making well over fifteen thousand dollars a year," making her earnings from writing comparable to the most popular writers of the period in Canada or the U.S., male or female (McMullen, *DLB* 105). Carole Gerson, in her article "Canadian Women Writers and American Markets, 1880-1940," makes the point that "*Uncle Tom's Cabin* brought Harriet Beecher Stowe $10,000 in royalties in the first four months after its publication, in 1852" (107). She further notes that, "Louisa May Alcott, who had the foresight to retain the copyright to *Little Women* (1868), rather than sell it outright for $1,000, achieved financial solvency with her first royalty cheque for $8,500" (107).[14] Fleming, who is today far less well known than Stowe or Alcott, was earning a similar income, an indication of her popularity and success during her lifetime.

In 1875, the year before she signed the contract with the *New York Weekly*, Fleming had moved her family from Saint John to Brooklyn, New York, so she could live closer to her publisher. The deed to the Brooklyn house was in Fleming's name only—not John's and not jointly (McMullen, *Silenced* 70). John Fleming would later claim he was "a hard working, hard fisted mechanic" (qtd. in McMullen, *Silenced* 64), but the known facts give little credence to his boast. He may have been violent as well as unsupportive. He took credit for securing his wife's contracts with the American publishers, but McMullen believes he was exaggerating his role: "While John's involvement in the negotiations is debatable, it is certainly possible that he pushed [Fleming] to try to get more money for her stories if she could. There was never any chance that Fleming [...] could give up her writing in the early years of housekeeping and childbearing" (McMullen, *Silenced* 64).

According to one of McMullen's sources, Fleming "had a husband who made her life wretched, and from whom she was always hiding," and the same source says that "she worked hard for the money he claimed as his right" (qtd. in McMullen 71). There was, again, a positive aspect to this hard circumstance. McMullen attributes Fleming's prolific output to John's unpredictable and temperamental nature, since she keenly felt the need to create a secure domestic environment and future for her children. Over the course of her career, Fleming wrote approximately forty novels in twenty years.[15] The exact number is imprecise because many of Fleming's novels, as McMullen shows, reappeared slightly disguised: "Because of their popularity, her novels were frequently reprinted, many under two or more different titles. At times they were pirated by British and Canadian publishers and again given different titles" (McMullen, "Checklist" 26).[16] All these factors have made the completion of a comprehensive bibliography difficult for scholars.[17]

By 1877, according to McMullen, Fleming was "estranged from her intemperate husband." Furthermore, her health was failing; she was diagnosed with Bright's Disease, a chronic kidney condition, while in her thirties, which dictated that she reduce her writing workload ("Mrs. May Agnes Fleming" 5). In her last years, she produced only one novel per year, but through her continued publications in well-known periodicals, Fleming maintained her name as a writer of American popular fiction. On March 24, 1880, May Agnes Fleming died at the age of thirty-nine. Her novels continued to be reprinted into the early twentieth century, "[for] the thirty years following her death" as long as her daughter Maude Fleming was around to promote them (McMullen, "Checklist" 28). After that, they went out of print and she was largely forgotten.

I.ii A Woman's Will

On February 1, 1876, Fleming, by then a thirty-five year old woman, and mother of four children under the age of ten, drew up her will. She pointedly excluded her husband, John, from any bequest, and left virtually everything, including the future royalties from her books, to be divided among her four children. Feeling the effects of her failing health, it is clear that Fleming wanted to provide for her children after her death, knowing her husband probably would not. As executors of her will, she named Patrick Meade, a parishioner from her church, and Francis S. Smith, her publisher and the editor of the *New York Weekly* (McMullen, *Silenced* 70).[18] In the will, Fleming outlined the Catholic upbringing and education she expected for her children. A newspaper account of the will thirteen years later observed "first, that she was intensely anxious that her children should be brought up in the Roman Catholic faith, and second, that her husband, William J. [John] Fleming, should have absolutely nothing to do either with them or their inheritance" ("Secret" n.pag.). Indeed, Fleming indicated that, should John Fleming assume responsibility for the children, "no part of her estate [would be paid] to their education and support" (McMullen, *Silenced* 70). This condition was obviously intended to keep John from gaining access to the estate indirectly through the pretext of raising the heirs. Fleming's executors were to handle the estate until every child reached the age of majority, at which time each would receive an equal portion. For her daughters Maude and Agnes, Fleming stipulated one further condition: if either of her daughters married before the age of twenty-one, she would receive her share of the estate only on the condition that the share was "immediately invested for her benefit by the trustees in such a manner as to be for her sole use, not under the control or subject to the debts of her husband" (qtd. in McMullen, *Silenced* 71).

There are several exceptional aspects of Fleming's will. It was progressive in its consideration of her daughters, because it ensured their financial freedom beyond marriage "[a]t a time when women could not vote, could not own property if married, and were denied access to the kinds of education and occupations available to men" (Hamilton 9). It was protective in its determination to shield the children from the influence of their father. In its resolute self-sufficiency and economic self-determination, it bespeaks the will of a successful professional woman. And, of course, it is also a striking testament to an unhappy marriage.

Fleming's income from writing far exceeded the earnings of most women in her day. Yet recognition for women's work was still negligible. McMullen discovered that in the Saint John census for 1871, Fleming, "despite her popular and commercial success, despite earning an income far beyond that which a Saint John boilermaker could ever dream of, and despite her traditional duties as wife and mother, is credited with neither career nor employment" (McMullen, *Silenced* 65). In other words, although Fleming earned the money and ran the household, there was no official recognition of her as a professional in the 1870s. While the lack of professional designations for women would not have been unusual, because of Fleming's clear literary success, she makes a striking case for the need for such designations, and for the irrefutable discrimination against working and ambitious women of the time.

The lack of recognition for nineteenth-century women writers plagued women in the United States as well. Joyce W. Warren provides numerous practical and literary examples of women's struggles. The prevailing attitude was expressed by Ralph Waldo Emerson's idea "that 'women should find in man her guardian,'" a notion that, Warren says, had to seem fatuous to women who were, by choice or by circumstance, the breadwinners for their families. Warren illustrates this point with several examples:

> Fanny Fern, who worked as a seamstress after her husband died, pointed out in *Ruth Hall* (1855) and in her newspaper articles that not only did women have to work, but working women were the victims of class *and* gender discrimination. E.D.E.N. Southworth, in *The Hidden Hand* (1859), demonstrated that Capitola as a young girl could not find a job in New York City until she dressed as a boy. Louisa May Alcott, in "Behind a Mask" (1861), although she did not condone the machinations of Jean Muir, was sympathetic to the position that she was in: poor and friendless, she was treated with contempt by those who were more affluent than she. (Warren, "Introduction" 4)

Fleming would have made a worthy addition to her list. She exemplifies one of the problems for married women in her will—their assumed financial dependence on men and their invisibility in the workforce—and, like many of the writers Warren lists, in her novels she embodies her argument with characters who participate in the workforce and resist the strictures of marriage. Her characters, at their best, could imagine different, better outcomes in their lives.

McMullen perceives an anger in Fleming's writing, which she attributes to the "superior education, material success, and intelligence" she possessed compared to her husband:

> Fleming had every reason for anger when she considered her place in patriarchal society. She was a successful professional woman who had shown herself to have talent, ambition, drive, and initiative, a popular and commercially successful and sought-after writer, yet her social status remained strictly domestic, that of a boilermaker's wife. Her successful career came while bearing and bringing up children. She had good reason to be rebellious at the status society ascribed to her and at society's expectations of her. (McMullen, *Silenced* 68)

Fleming's sense of the disempowerment of women is encoded, I maintain, in the plots of her fiction almost as palpably as in the will she left behind. She uses her fiction to convey her frustration with the condition of femininity and nineteenth-century patriarchy, and disavows those conditions by representing women not destroyed by male dominance but empowered to change it. Fleming's will shows the motivation behind her fiction, while the novels do the cultural work of challenging the dominant views of womanhood by portraying women as independent, strong, and capable of much more than opportunity allows them.

I.iii Gender and Genre in Fleming's Fiction

The popular genre within which Fleming found her success is variously called sentimentality, woman's fiction, and domestic fiction. The terms characterize popular, romantic nineteenth-century novels written by women about women. Joyce W. Warren points out a semantic peculiarity: "the word *sentimental* in American criticism was made synonymous with 'woman writer'" ("Introduction" 10). Women writers, however diverse, Warren writes, "were equally damned by the label *sentimental*, and generations of readers never took the trouble to read them to find out whether they were sentimental or not; the assumption was that if they were nineteenth-century American women writers, they were sentimental and consequently not worth reading" (Warren, "Introduction" 10). In Canadian criticism, I would argue, the terms "sentimental" and "sensibility" are often similarly gendered, and used to label texts that by the early twentieth century were considered old-fashioned, and therefore negligible.[19] For this study, I use the term "domestic fiction" because it is relatively neutral and, probably for that reason, currently the most accepted term for the genre, even though Fleming's novels sometimes incorporate sentimental elements, and, as I will argue, are covertly anti-domestic.

In *Woman's Fiction*, Nina Baym describes the formula of domestic fiction by nineteenth-century women: "The many novels all tell, with variations, a single tale.

In essence, it is the story of a young girl who is deprived of the supports she had rightly or wrongly depended on to sustain her throughout life and is faced with the necessity of winning her own way in the world" (11). Baym explains that because domestic fiction "participates in one overplot," the distinguishable factor in all of the novels by numerous women are "plot elements," which accounts for the examination of close narrative development in the study of domestic fiction (12). Through domestic fiction, women writers exposed the limitations of, and challenged, the dominant gender ideology in the nineteenth century. Fleming, like the other writers in this study, uses a particular genre—in her case, domestic fiction—as the means to make her social commentary.

Fleming's concern for women within the institution of marriage is so strong that she repeatedly writes about it. In this way, her novels function as a complementary legacy to her will. Some of the titles of Fleming's novels give an indication of their anti-domestic narratives: *A Wife's Tragedy* (1866), *A Woman's Vengeance* (1868), *The Unseen Bridegroom; or, Wedded for a Week* (1869), *A Mad Marriage* (1875), and *Fated to Marry* (1881). These titles show both her concern with, and her resistance to conventional narratives with "happy endings" that conclude simply with weddings. The men in Fleming's novels are often weak, ineffectual, or predictable, while the women, all too often steered wrongly by convention, rebel, to discover their inner strength, independence, and individuality.

Fleming uses domestic fiction to warn girls and women about the confines of traditional patriarchal constructions. Her choice of genre is not surprising given that women had access socially and materially to fiction by and for women. Since then, domestic fiction of the nineteenth century has been marginalized culturally and literarily because of its generic excesses, notably its dramatic plotlines, effusive characters, and overwrought emotions. Fleming, like many writers of domestic fiction, uses the genre to publicly access other women, both as a political gesture to effect change, and as a creative outlet to imagine beyond the limitations of her own experience. Within domestic fiction, as I will show, Fleming criticizes the institution of marriage, portrays the empowerment of women outside of conventional roles, and imagines equality between genders, and among classes. Other women writers also created domestic fiction with different kinds of social reform, including Harriet Beecher Stowe, who wrote about racial reform in *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1852). The artfulness of domestic fiction arises out of narratives that appear to be simply about a young girl growing into a marriageable woman but that encode other social issues as well. Fleming refuses to leave her heroines at the moment they marry, the formula followed in many early domestic novels, and insists instead on continuing the narrative into the years following marriage, representing couples struggling with issues of domestic power and gender roles. The genre of domestic fiction provides a public place for women to air views about social reform without overtly protesting or taking a political stand.

Critics like Lora Romero point out that "because narrative was not considered rhetorical (rhetoric being associated with the 'masculine' political sphere), writing fiction was seen as a particularly appropriate way for women to exert their indirect influence for the good of society" (16). In the past twenty-five years, American feminist critics have resuscitated domestic fiction and given it a place in literary history perhaps for the first time. They see cultural significance in fiction written predominantly by women in the mid-nineteenth century, allowing for more diverse readings of novels like Fleming's than they had been accorded by either her male contemporaries like Nathaniel Hawthorne[20] or later modernist critics. In the early twentieth century, even into the late 1970s, domestic fiction was ignored by scholars and critics, discounted as "non-literature," in Baym's phrase (xv), because it was popular and it was written by women, two characteristics that discredited it as 'high' literature. Ann Douglas' contribution to the debate of the cultural influence of Victorian domestic fiction in *The Feminization of American Culture* (1977) redefined sentimentalism and established the parameters for the recuperation of domestic fiction as a practical and valuable genre. She promoted further scholarship to increase the understanding of women's position in the nineteenth century.[21] Douglas' idea is that sentimentalism takes on meaningfulness by drawing attention to what a culture denies, to what is implied but not said, to what codes are being used to convey information covertly, and to what is on the periphery but never centrally acknowledged or discussed. Depictions of class and gender in Fleming's novels are subtly over-dressed by elements of sentimentalism: convoluted plot twists, mischievous secondary characters, and overwrought details or melodrama. Any political statement in Fleming's novels is similarly never overt, but rather, I suggest, is couched in the genre and defused by it. As a result, it is hardly surprising that sentimentalism in literature has been denigrated precisely *because* it masks its deepest concerns behind a seemingly trivial surface.

When Jane Tompkins published *Sensational Designs: The Cultural Work of American Fiction 1790-1860* (1985), she added to the debate on domestic fiction by reading it outside of modernist critical views, and reversing the values of literary history to read power and liberation within it. Tompkins believes that modernist ideas about literature have impaired the ability to critique domestic fiction in anything other than a condescending manner. In reading domestic fiction, Tompkins asks readers to forego their preconceived notions about literature. She argues that these notions, which she describes as "familiar categories for evaluating fiction," such as "stylistic intricacy, psychological subtlety, epistemological complexity," stand in the way of appreciating domestic fiction (Tompkins 126). In Fleming's work, as in most domestic fiction, there is a tendency toward melodrama, and Tompkins argues that melodrama asks the reader to overlook reality and to value imagination by allowing coincidence or happenstance to advance the plot. Tompkins suggests, like Douglas and Baym, that women were writing domestic fiction—an altogether acceptable genre for them to write given the constricting role of 'femininity' in the nineteenth century—in an effort to comment upon, if not to change, the social order. Tompkins' study encompasses more of the political in domestic fiction than do the earlier studies of Douglas and Baym. Tompkins' viewpoint can be applied to Fleming's novels, where often the "pure and powerless" must change or grow independent in order to redeem the powerful. In this way, Fleming's novels, like other domestic novels, attempt to evoke a personal awareness within the reader by depicting the road to redemption through individual growth and change.

Like Tompkins, Lora Romero characterizes domestic fiction as a protest against patriarchy and she sees this challenge to the social order as the motivation for women writers who wrote in the genre:

> Domesticity's origins are explicitly antipatriarchal, and while to argue this is not the same thing as arguing that domesticity was feminist, radical, or even the best that women could do under the circumstances, it does explain why so many women took up the pen in behalf of a philosophy that seems, from a contemporary perspective, so at odds with women's political, economic, and personal independence. Such women were neither victims of false consciousness nor clever manipulators of an ideology forced upon them and for which they had secret contempt. Instead, they were women who found in the antipatriarchal analysis of the family at the heart of domesticity a compelling language for describing women's second-class status and for imagining ways (some more efficacious than others) of improving it. (20)

Romero sees the inherent contradiction within domestic fiction as gendered but defiant. Domestic fiction, while representing women's conventional roles as untenable because of the circumstances of plot and character, resisted the systems already in place by patriarchal culture.

In reading Fleming's novels from this perspective, it becomes clear that she seeks to imagine and convey a different social order, wherein women who marry wrongly or poorly have the opportunity to reclaim their lives through gainful employment. Such ideas lead to a reconsideration of class, since working women in the nineteenth century were usually of a lower class, working out of necessity. Indeed, their work sometimes precluded marriage, as is depicted by Fleming through the character of Jemima-Ann in *Lost for a Woman*. Jemima-Ann cooks and cleans at a boarding-house, and although she often is caught reading romance novels on the job, she neither expects nor is expected to marry, because of her working-class status.

Since financial solvency and independence can lead to social accessibility and mobility, its effect on breaking down gender roles in the nineteenth century becomes evident. Fleming writes the marriage plot of domestic fiction, but she continues the narrative to portray women in troubled marriages, who must find a way to mend their marriages or liberate themselves from the situation. Fleming portrays female characters who leave their marriages despite the hardship and working-class status they must endure. Their choice, hard as it is, is preferable to the confinement of bad marriages. In making that choice, Fleming extols women's capabilities for working, for earning a living, and for gaining a sense of self and autonomy.

One of the conventions of domestic fiction noted by critics is that female characters are generally morally superior to male characters. "Although thinking of women as the living gospel for men gives women a certain authority," as Romero says, "it also defines them in terms of men's needs" (22). At times, Fleming overturns this convention in the novels I discuss, because her female characters are strong-willed, stubborn, and not necessarily the 'angels' expected in such fiction. However, they carry with them a sense of their own moral wrongdoing as well as a sense of the injustice done to them when they leave their domestic environment in search of a more tolerable existence. Romero also points out that many authors use "images of physical confinement to express patriarchal culture's violence against the integrity of female selfhood," and Fleming's *Carried by Storm*, which I discuss later in this chapter, is a telling example of this device (23). Romero further suggests that "declarations of women's moral superiority and civilizing influence, as well as claims for the managerial and practical skills they acquired through labor in the home, also paved the way for women's entry into professional careers" (31). In the novels I discuss, when Fleming's heroines leave the domestic space into which they have married, they are generally well suited to the task of seeking their fortunes and futures elsewhere. Depictions of such pragmatic cultural reform for women are characteristic of domestic fiction, and as Fleming's career progresses, her novels express an increasingly strong stance on women and marriage, and thus a practical, if guarded, feminism.

Gillian Brown's work focuses on domestic fiction and individualism, and she maintains that the cultural forms and practices of individualism expressed within the domestic space "reveal a self continually under construction, or at least renovation" (1). "What women wanted," Brown writes, "was, quite literally, themselves" (5). Fleming's heroines make this case within the realm of fiction, where the women who were her readers could imagine or perhaps fantasize their liberation outside of and beyond their gender limitations of materialism, economics, and personal freedom (just as, I argue, the text of her will makes the case for Fleming biographically).

I.iv. Sufferers, Bullies, Gentlemen—and More

I am going to discuss three of Fleming's novels as prototypes, in order to illustrate her use of conventions of the domestic novel and, equally importantly, to demonstrate the personal touches she brings to the genre. The three novels, *The Actress' Daughter* (1886), *Carried By Storm* (1878), and *Lost for a Woman* (1880), all follow a female protagonist from childhood through various trials and difficulties, and into marriage. In terms of plot and character, in many ways these novels are virtually interchangeable, demonstrating the formulaic pattern of Fleming's fiction.[22] Within the gross dictates of the genre, these novels show Fleming's particular uses of domestic fiction, especially her predilections for character-types and plot developments. Taken together, I hope they will provide an impression of Fleming's way of proceeding as a popular novelist. Presumably, her handling of plot and character played no small role in winning her a large audience throughout her career.

Fleming was so chained to these predilections that the principal elements of her novels were largely predictable. Many of her novels follow a female character from her youth to maturity. This character is prototypically a *Sufferer*, one who endures abuse and hardships in her early life and then finally breaks free in an act of rebellion, and eventually establishes her autonomy through hard work and hitherto unseen and unappreciated talents. Her hardships are usually visited on her at the beginning by a family to which she is indentured for some reason, usually because she has been adopted or fostered by them after being orphaned or abandoned. This family is made up of *Bullies*, insensitive oafs, often male but sometimes female, who are determined to humiliate the Sufferer because she is an outsider in the family circle and, they naïvely believe, a second-class citizen. The Sufferer's plight is partly relieved by the ministrations of a *Gentleman*, usually a person of some local stature, who secretly encourages her or provides her with the means for education or training to better herself. Either the Gentleman or some member of his upper-class family courts the Sufferer when she comes of age, usually against the wishes of other family members, especially potential heirs. Because of the Sufferer's indebtedness to the Gentleman, she accepts his proposal and often finds herself in a loveless marriage or one mired in problems—real or provoked—particularly because of the family's low opinion of her. In her desperation, the Sufferer, now mired in intolerable circumstances, either commits an act of violence or otherwise humiliates herself, and flees rather than faces the embarrassment and persecution that will surely follow. Alone and bereft, she discovers well-springs of courage. Over the course of time, she becomes self-sufficient and, usually by virtue of a long-lost benefactor, well-to-do. She does not, however, live happily ever after. Instead, she returns to the scene of her humiliation, but as a new woman, remade and refined. She is, it turns out, superior in breeding as well as intelligence to the Bullies. She can now reconcile with the Gentleman on equal terms, and often chooses to do so.

Within these broad outlines, there are variations both in character and plot. Indeed, the range of plot and character, limited as it may seem to readers removed from it by a century and especially to those raised on 'high' literature rather than popular fiction, appears to have been sufficient to keep Fleming's readers coming back for more, assuming quite reasonably that her commercial success was predicated on a core of loyal fans who stuck with her from one novel to the next. In the summaries that follow, while I will inevitably recapitulate the progression of the Sufferers, Bullies and Gentlemen in the three novels, I will also show the variations.

Most important, in outlining the plots, I will also find opportunities to reveal what I believe to be Fleming's strengths, and the likely source, it seems to me, of her relative success in what was a crowded and competitive field. First, I will necessarily quote from the novels where direct quotation is more revealing than paraphrase, and in so doing, I hope to convey a sense of the author's direct prose style. Though Fleming deals in caricatures and melodrama, her prose is relatively controlled. Secondly, the content of the quotations will include asides to her readers, where Fleming's voice seems to break through the conventional surface of her domestic fiction, if only momentarily, to speak candidly to her readers, particularly on issues of wifely obedience and conjugal inequality. These asides confuse the conventional surface of the novels, though only momentarily, to the point where one is occasionally left wondering how the author, having portrayed the stifling bonds of loveless marriage, could allow the Sufferer to return to the Gentleman no matter how her circumstances had changed. In reading Fleming today, so far removed from her popular heyday and unaffected by the melodrama of her fictional surface, these asides are striking and sustaining. It is worth wondering if her faithful readers did not glimpse in Fleming a rather more convinced skeptic about marriage and sexual politics than she was allowed to realize in her characters and plots. That is a question I will consider in later sections, after examining three of Fleming's novels in detail.

I.iv.a Domestic Liberation through art in *The Actress' Daughter*

In all three novels, the family heritage and ancestry of the main character is called into question, introducing several plot twists. Knowing one's family history is essential to knowing what social class one belongs to, and class directly reflects how others perceive and receive a person. In *The Actress' Daughter*, Alice Randall Darrell, an actress and the mother of two children, Georgia and Warren, dies in a snowstorm, leaving her children homeless. Georgia Darrell is raised by a cranky, Bible-thumping spinster, Miss Jerusha Skamp. Georgia's brother Warren disappears after the opening scene, but she believes that he must have perished in the storm. In fact, Warren survives and miraculously finds his way back to his grandfather Randall. When Georgia rediscovers Warren as an adult, he has inherited the Randall estate. The resolution of ancestry in Fleming's novels is important as it establishes a character's roots, and it almost always complicates the plots by revealing that the protagonist is different from what others have assumed she is—impoverished and of low social status. Through family heritage, she is revealed to belong to a higher class, and Fleming addresses the issue of prejudice and the consequences of making superficial judgements.

Georgia, the Sufferer in this novel, is strong-willed, disobedient, and smart, although she rarely applies herself. She only attends school after a neighbour, the

Gentleman, Richmond Wildair, challenges her to do so, and eventually her wayward habits are overcome by an education at which she excels. The relationship between Georgia as a young girl and Richmond as a wealthy and older neighbour is described as follows:

> Richmond Wildair understood her because he possessed an astute and powerful intellect, and mastered her, because he had a *will*, equal to her own, and a mind, by education and cultivation infinitely superior. Georgia, almost unknown to herself, had a profound admiration and respect for *strength*, whether bodily or mental; and the moment Richmond Wildair let her see he could conquer her, that moment he achieved a command over the wild girl he never lost. (78)

Early in the novel, Fleming sets up the dynamic between Richmond and Georgia. Richmond is the wise patriarch in the beginning, and he challenges Georgia to excel. Yet his motives are not purely benevolent, and he privately revels in "conquering" Georgia (75). The inequality of the dynamic, with Georgia as a younger woman of a lower social status than Richmond, sets the tone for what will come.

Traditionally in domestic fiction, when young female protagonists from precarious or unknown backgrounds are involved, the question of marriage becomes especially fraught.[23] In *The Actress' Daughter*, when Georgia and Richmond marry, rather than describing her delight at her "coup," Georgia is overtaken by a sense of foreboding:

> The look in Georgia's eyes on her wedding morning bespoke anything but the calm, perfect peace and joy of a 'blessed bride.' Was it a vague, shadowy terror of the new life before her? Was it distrust of him, distrust of herself, or a nameless fear of the changes time must bring? She did not know, she could not tell; but there was a dread, a horror of she knew not what overshadowing her like a cloud.
>
> (Fleming, *AD* 180)

In *The Actress' Daughter*, once the protagonist is married and the novel continues to follow her in her marriage, the narrator self-consciously lets the reader know about the shift in structure—that is, the continuation of the domestic novel beyond the wedding. The revealing passage, quoted in full in the epigraph to this chapter, includes this imprecation: "My heroine is married, but the history of her life cannot end here [...] I hope none of my readers will be disappointed if [...] I depart from this established rule" (85). Fleming's aside to the reader shows how conscious is her break with convention. It is a kind of apology, but without any regrets. Her resolve to show "the dark as well as the bright side" shows beyond a doubt Fleming's awareness of her literary move toward realism, depicting hardships within the institution of marriage that were normally glossed over in domestic fiction. While Fleming shows that she is fully aware of the formula of domestic novels, she also makes it clear that she cannot follow it in good faith. Instead, Fleming follows her heroines into their marriages, where the narrative becomes volatile.

Fleming also shows in her apology that she is fully aware of the traditional female characters, those "angels in the house" so prominent in Victorian novels, but she makes a case for her more realistic portrayals of flawed female characters, "not in the least like one of those angels oftener read of than seen" (Fleming, *AD* 185). In the novel's early history, authors were reminded of their responsibility to their readers, and warned about unduly influencing readers by the images and situations they described—women being considered especially vulnerable to what they read. Nancy Armstrong traces the development of the novel from its "debased" beginnings to its becoming a didactic force that "pushed carnival and popular culture to the margins of social life," specifically as it related to women:

> Until well into the eighteenth century the reading of fiction was considered tantamount to seduction, but in the last decades of that century, certain novels were found fit to occupy the idle hours of women, children, and servants. [...] Certain novels in particular transformed all they contained into the materials of a gendered

> universe. And once they did so transform the signs of political identity, such signs could, as the Brontës' madwomen demonstrate, include forms of desire that challenged the norms distinguishing gender. Reading such works of fiction would still have the desirable effect of inducing a specific form of political unconscious. (Armstrong 17-18)

Thus, domestic fiction that shifts the political message within the formula creates what Frederic Jameson calls "the unmasking of cultural objects as socially symbolic acts" (qtd. in Armstrong 263 n14). In "writing beyond the ending," Fleming debunks the fantasy that domestic novels—and women's lives—end at the moment of the wedding. On the contrary, her heroines in the novels I discuss here are portrayed as imperfect domestic role-players who rebel by acting or speaking outside of the acceptable strictures of femininity, and who must eventually flee their domestic environment to create a new life on their own. The ideology of gender shifts under the pressures of self-fulfillment, and for Fleming it becomes a problem to resolve within the genre of domestic fiction. For her readers, presumably, the depiction of marriage creates an imagined alternative to the *status quo* and potentially arouses their political unconscious to consider alternatives to the gendered power relations that typically exist in marriage.

Georgia appears to have married above her social class when she weds Richmond Wildair, much to the dismay of Richmond's mother and his female cousin Freddy Richmond. Together, Mrs. Richmond and Freddy, two bullies in this novel, scheme to shame Richmond for his *mésalliance* in the hopes of ruining the marriage. Not only do they continuously set Georgia up to fail at tasks of etiquette and in the reception of guests, but they also plant the idea that Georgia is flirting with a male guest to provoke jealousy in Richmond. Finally, when Freddy insults Georgia's ancestry and her lack of manners in private, Georgia lashes out against the overwhelming injustices against her. In a dramatic scene, Georgia physically attacks Freddy, and pushes her against a wall. At this violence, Richmond, who believes his mother's and his cousin's version of events, threatens both to lock Georgia up whenever company visits and to divorce her, but she leaves him before he can do either. When he threatens her, Richmond becomes the Bully from whom Georgia escapes.

Georgia's marriage follows the pattern defined by Nancy Armstrong, who outlines the shift in politics between early domestic fiction (prior to 1818) and domestic fiction written after 1848. She notes that between 1818 and 1848, it was as if domestic fiction was on hiatus, as it was simply not being written, and particularly not as it had been. Armstrong examines the shift in domestic fiction via political unrest following the French Revolution and the struggle against the industrialization of Britain. Therefore, as Armstrong sees it,

> [m]arriage no longer provided the antidote to restrictive and arbitrary status distinctions, and therefore it no longer softened the boundary that enclosed the dominant culture. Instead, it became commonplace to use marriage as a way of drawing a line around culture in order to preserve it in the face of a competitive market place. At issue in the novels of the 1840s was, in other words, the nature of the problem that marriage was supposed to resolve." (163)

Whereas in the earlier domestic fiction, marriage could bridge two classes, and create a harmonious balance between two people, in the later fiction, given the political changes in Britain, marriage, too, was a competitive ground on which to stake claim to, or indeed to cling to one's status. By the time Fleming was writing domestic fiction in the 1870s, she was problematizing marriage itself as upholding hegemonic gender and class distinctions. Armstrong explains the shift in the later domestic fiction: "The novels of 1848 begin with violent scenes of punishment and exclusion: [...] And each of these scenes of unjustified punishment generates tremendous outrage on behalf of the powerless. To begin with, the violence itself seems to have an external cause. In one form or another, history has intruded upon the household and disrupted its traditional order" (177). As the political world shifted from a rural-based economy to an industrialized one, so did traditional familial relations necessarily shift. Fleming's novels follow the historically-based trend outlined by Armstrong, wherein marriages between two social classes cause problems for the protagonist and her husband. Yet in Fleming's novels, the protagonist not only feels outraged but also takes action, and the powerless person rises up in self-defense and self-preservation. Georgia is portrayed as "powerless," the one character without social status who marries into the middle class, but in her despair after being deceived and slandered by her husband's relatives, she resorts to physical violence in her own defense. The ruffian quality of her actions proves her husband's relatives' point in the short term, making the sting of injustice even greater. It is some time before Richmond Wildair learns the truth about his mother's and cousin's ruse to ruin his marriage. Fleming portrays Georgia as a character so strong-willed that not only does she leave her marriage and find a position as a governess in New York to support herself, but also, despite the love she feels for Richmond, refuses to return to the husband who misjudged her until she has achieved her personal goals and gained the independence she had given up for marriage.

Wildair, by contrast, gains strength of character through his union with Georgia. This aspect is also a convention of domestic fiction. According to

Armstrong, "[t]hrough marriage to someone of a lower station the male [character] but not the female of the upper gentry can be redeemed" (113). This idea is not to suggest, as Armstrong continues, "that this class of people really behaved in so paradoxical a manner as fiction depicted them, but rather that such a representation of the upper gentry offered the rhetorical means for redistributing certain attributes, along with the corresponding powers and privileges, according to the privilege of gender" (113). Such is the case for Georgia and Wildair. Once Richmond discovers the truth, he implores his mother and cousin to ask forgiveness of Georgia, as she also asks for it, and he goes on, inspired, to excel in a career as a "politician for the people" as a way of publicly proving his worth to Georgia. The obvious moral of the tale—that people should learn to look beyond class differences—is paralleled by a more subtle moral, namely, that women should take control of their lives, and pursue stimulating and independent goals in order to earn the place they want to occupy, rather than attempting to marry into it.

When Georgia learns that her husband regrets threatening her, and that he seeks reconciliation, she does not rush directly back to him. Instead, she weighs her own motives for returning to the marriage: "Somehow she scarcely could tell why she did not wish to meet [Richmond] yet; if ever she returned to him, it must be in a way different from what she left. She [...] had a vehement desire to win wealth and fame, and return to Richmond Wildair as his equal in every way" (Fleming, *AD* 318). Fleming pushes the genre by portraying Georgia's quest for autonomy. Even though Richmond Wildair has grown and changed, his readiness and willingness to reconcile with Georgia is not the novel's main focus. Georgia becomes an independent, talented, thoughtful character who will not return to her marriage without first fulfilling her own goals and needs.

Fleming further ventures beyond the conventions of domestic fiction by giving her character a fully developed career choice. While working as a governess for a family in a small community, Georgia begins to nurture her artistic aptitude. In this respect, one contemporary critic found the portrayal of Georgia "radical on Fleming's part [because of] the degree to which she licenses aesthetic ambition in Georgia" (Stoyan 16). Georgia develops her talent as a painter to the point where she creates a painting of Hagar[24] that wins her a prestigious New York award. Fleming's choice of Hagar as Georgia's subject is political, as Hagar has been figuratively seen to show at times the devaluation of women by women, as is shown through Georgia's oppression by Freddy and Mrs. Wildair. Yet, Hagar also represents female liberation and empowerment against patriarchal restrictions.[25] Here again, Georgia finds herself bedeviled by gender inequality. Fleming portrays the art community's inability to believe that the artist is a woman in the following exchange from the point of view of

Mr. Leonard, the man who employed Georgia as a governess, and who entered her painting in the competition. The following exchange takes place when he reveals the sex of the artist to the judges:

> "The artist's not a man at all, but a young lady." Well, would you believe it, they fairly laughed at the notion at first. [...]
>
> "A lady paint that!" said the head whiskerando [...] staring at Hagar. "I never heard of such a thing. One thing is certain, she either was not in her right mind, or was the reverse of happy when she did it." (Fleming, *AD* 332)

The "head whiskerando" in Fleming's passage represents the Victorian patriarch who is not only skeptical about great art created by a woman, but also provides excuses in an attempt to rationalize her ability. As Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar suggest, "a woman writer must examine, assimilate, and transcend the extreme images of 'angel' and 'monster'" (17). Through her portrayal of Georgia as a talented artist of profound and disturbing images beyond the bounds expected of women, Fleming exposes the limitations of these expectations and their lack of reality.

By the novel's end, *The Actress' Daughter* approaches marriage in a new light as Georgia and Richmond reunite only after he has learned to overcome his desire to "conquer" and teach her, and after she can return to him on equal ground—with fortune (the inheritance from her grandfather) and vocation (her art). In the end, Richmond and Georgia reconcile in a marriage of equals. Fleming's characterization of Georgia as an independent, self-sufficient artist makes a striking contrast to the determined, underprivileged foundling she had been at the beginning of the novel. Georgia Wildair represents one of the most forceful portrayals of a wife in Fleming's novels.

I.iv.b. Liberation but Isolation in *Carried By Storm*

The second novel, *Carried By Storm*, moves the protagonist outside the marriage plot. While many of Fleming's novels warn women against the perils of marrying for wealth or status or stability, instead of attaining those things independently, in some novels she also takes a stand against domestic violence. In *Carried By Storm*, the main character, Joanna, is known in the community as Sleaford's Joanna, an epithet that presupposes that she is an orphan taken in as the servant of the Sleaford family. Joanna is physically and emotionally abused by Giles Sleaford and his children throughout the novel. Readers learn only that Giles Sleaford once rescued Joanna from a life on the streets. Her adoptive family treat her contemptuously because she lacks any known lineage or heritage. Joanna laments her miserable existence and she longs to know of her ancestry.

Sleaford's Joanna has a penchant for knowledge of all kinds, and she reads what segments of novels she can find around the Sleaford house. Geoffrey Lamar, an aristocratic neighbour, takes pity on Joanna, and he secretly brings books to her after he notices her interest in reading. Lamar arranges for Joanna to be secretly educated with the help of his mother, Mrs. Abbott, and in this way Joanna clandestinely becomes better educated than the family for whom she works. Her singing voice is also nurtured, and people begin to recognize her talent for music. Even though she is treated as a family servant, Joanna's superior intellect becomes evident through her exposure to education. Fleming espouses the superficiality of class as a social determinant of privilege through Joanna, who, when surreptitiously afforded educational opportunity, grows and flourishes intellectually despite her squalid and stifling living conditions in the Sleaford home.

Through it all, Joanna is subjected to physical abuse by the Sleafords. In this respect, Joanna becomes a prototype for Romero's characterization that "images of physical confinement express patriarchal culture's violence against the integrity of female selfhood" (23). The physical abuse she suffers at the hands of the Sleafords shows the empowerment of the privileged group over a girl of unknown origins. Joanna's talent and education make her more of a threat, or certainly more of a target, to the Sleaford family, who seek to confine her within the limitations of her position as slave-girl in the family dynamic. In so doing, they maintain their position above her. Yet, in a climactic scene, Joanna strikes back. One of the Sleaford boys, Dan, whips her for refusing to sing at a pub for his friends, and in self-defence she hits him in the head with the butt-end of the whip. Joanna is forced to flee the Sleaford home. Her retaliation against Dan is equivalent to Georgia's act of violence in *The Actress' Daughter*, as are its consequences. Afraid to face the Sleafords, whom she knows will punish her mercilessly, and ashamed to face the Abbott family, her benefactors, Joanna runs away to New York with a neighbour George Blake under the pretense that she will marry him. Once there, she flees from him as well.

The mood of the novel, and the mood of its protagonist, change completely at this point. Fleming describes Joanna's freedom in New York in exclamatory terms: "She is free! her old life lies behind her, with its shame, its pain, forever and ever. She is here in the city of her desire, the world all before her where to choose!" (Fleming, *CBS* 183). This Miltonic reference, from the last lines of *Paradise Lost*, "The world was all before them, where to choose" (Milton, *PL* Bk.12, ll. 646) recurs in Fleming's work, usually at the moment when her heroine has safely fled her oppressors.[26] It is interesting to note that when Fleming alludes to these lines from Milton, she is describing a moment of emancipation, although in *Paradise Lost* the line occurs at the end of the poem, at the point when Adam and Eve have been banished by God from the Garden of Eden. Fleming appears to be interpreting the ending of *Paradise Lost* by implying that the Garden of Eden was a confining and limiting space. In Fleming's reading, taking it to its logical end, God is a patriarchal presence, apparently an oppressive one, and Adam and Eve are not so much banished but actually freed from his absolute rule on leaving Eden. Fleming uses Milton's line to convey the paradoxical pain and fear of needing to flee and the relief of freedom for her heroines.

Joanna adopts the name Joanna Wild and finds a livelihood touring as a singing showgirl, exploiting her remarkable voice. Like Georgia with her talent for painting, Joanna liberates herself with her previously untapped talent. While this is a plot device to move the narrative forward in practical terms, it also conveys what appears to be Fleming's basic tenet: with freedom comes possibility. After a performance in New York, Joanna meets up with an old friend from her home town, Frank Livingston, who, on hearing her perform is "carried by storm," and proposes marriage to her. Joanna had secretly harboured strong feelings for Frank throughout her girlhood and she immediately accepts. The next day when she sees him, however, she can tell by the look on his face that he regrets having proposed to her. Nevertheless, Frank decides that he will honour his promise. Much as Joanna hoped to have her love reciprocated by him, she nonetheless shows strength of character when she refuses him. These relatively brief scenes of the impetuous proposal and its aftermath are the closest Fleming gets to a "typical" marriage plot in this novel. Instead, she upsets convention by using the marriage proposal as an opportunity to convey the whimsical nature of emotions and the impetuousness that can derive from them. Joanna's ability to empower herself further by recognizing Frank's disingenuous proposal and her own lack of fulfillment were she to accept it, brings about a dramatic marriage refusal. Yet the reader's estimation of Joanna increases as, rather than accept a loveless marriage proposal, she chooses self-sufficiency that ultimately proves her self-worth and respect.

Meanwhile, the Sleafords and the Abbotts discover that rich Mr. Abbott was previously married, and that Joanna is his daughter from that marriage. Mr. Abbott arranged for Sleaford to take in Joanna so that he would be free from the bonds of fatherhood to marry again. This revelation is so devastating to Mr. Abbott's reputation that he commits suicide. Joanna is thus the heir to his estate. She returns home to claim her inheritance, but she shows her integrity by sharing the estate with her half-sister Leo Abbott, which allows the Abbott family to continue living in their home. In spite of her generosity, Joanna remains an outsider within the Abbott family because of her earlier working-class status within the community. She then discovers that her mother, the one-time wife of Mr. Abbott, has been confined to an asylum in

San Francisco, and she travels to reunite with her mother. Joanna has her mother released from the asylum—another form of the patriarchal confinement of women[27]—and together they move to England, where readers are assured that Joanna eventually finds love with an English Earl.

While Joanna is "the pure and powerless" character of Tompkins' paradigm who changes and grows independent in order to save the powerful—in this case, the Abbotts, whom she saves financially, and the Sleafords, whom she saves morally—*Carried By Storm* includes a prosaic epilogue, more unconvincing than many others, as well as the most solitary main character of the novels discussed here. Joanna remains an outsider to those who knew her as an abused orphan, not only in the eyes of her abusers but also more sympathetic characters like Leo Abbott and Frank Livingston. She grows independent and good in spite of and without them. Joanna's bequest from her father means that her social class status is raised, equal to those who once cared for her, and above the Sleafords, but she realizes the limits of fortune as a balm for a broken heart, through the depiction of Mr. Abbott's suicide and her own continuing dissatisfaction in the setting where she suffered so much. For Joanna, developing a relationship with her long-lost mother is more important than wealth, and foregoing marriage is better than the kind of loveless marriage she would have had with Frank Livingston. That she is not married and projected to have several children by the novel's epilogue, as are most of Fleming's heroines, sets Joanna's character apart from the others.

The cultural work of *Carried By Storm* is less about marriage and more about family values, personal ethics, female empowerment, and the issue of class. Fleming's novels have been dismissed from the discussion of class in Canadian literature because "her romances featured primarily middle-class characters, while the working girl romance always had a working-class heroine" (McMaster 10), but in the two novels discussed so far, the heroine suffers through a period as a working-class girl, and is rewarded in the end with an unexpected discovery of higher status and the social rewards that go with it. Joanna's heritage is in fact known to two characters in the novel, the wealthy Mr. Abbott and his lower-class neighbour Giles Sleaford. As a result, the Sleaford family 'acquire' Joanna, and Abbott allows the Sleaford family to squat on his land and is bribed by Giles Sleaford to keep his secret.

Despite her mistreatment, Joanna behaves in a decent and upright manner after her heritage is uncovered, sharing her inheritance and using her wealth to liberate her mother as well as herself. In *Domestic Individualism*, Gillian Brown examines the link between "domestic ideology" and "possessive individualism" in domestic fiction, that she says requires a continuous redefinition of self for its protagonists. In this perspective, Joanna reconstructs herself in the novel, and becomes not only self-sufficient but self-assured, and possessed by a sense of justice and selfhood that outstrips every other character in the narrative. As Teresa Zackodnik explains, "[The] equation of self-dependence with the 'private' is, as Gillian Brown and Richard Brodhead have argued, part of the developing characterisation of the heroine in domestic and sentimental fiction that invested domesticity with values of interiority and individualism" (117). In the domestic settings of their formative years, both Georgia and Joanna were overpowered by males—Georgia, emotionally and publicly in front of a house full of guests by her husband Richmond Wildair, and Joanna physically by the Sleaford family. In both cases, the public abuse forces them to violent acts and causes them to flee out of shame and retaliation, and to discover and develop their "interior" self-dependency and ultimately their self-worth.

I.iv.c. Marriage in the Dénouement in *Lost for a Woman*

The third novel I will examine, *Lost for a Woman*, also presents working-class characters in a favourable light as redeemable human beings capable of finding self-fulfillment given half a chance. The novel opens by describing the daily chores of Jemima-Ann, who runs her aunt's boarding house:

> For seven long years, Jemima-Ann has waited on these children of the forge, and been anathematized in the strongest vernacular for slowness

> and 'muddle-headedness' and got dinners and teas, and washed dishes, and swept bedrooms, and made beds, and went errands, and read novels and story-papers, and watched the never-ending stream of boot-heels passing and repassing the dingy panes of glass, and waxed, from a country-lass of seventeen to a strong-armed, sallow-faced young woman of twenty-four; and all the romance of life that even came near her, to brighten the dull drab of every day, was contained in the 'awful' nice stories devoured in every spare moment left her in the busy caravansera of her aunt Samantha Hopkins. (3)

The list of chores with scant reward contrasts sharply with Jemima Ann's affinity for reading romance novels which help her to escape her drudgery. When a flamboyant trapeze artist, Mimi Trillon, arrives on the doorstep of the boarding house seeking shelter for herself and her beautiful baby daughter, Snowball, Jemima Ann pleads with her aunt to let them to stay: "Oh, Aunt Samantha, do let her come!" says Jemima Ann. "I should love to know a circus lady. Next to a duchess, an actress or a nun is the most romantic people in any story" (Fleming, *LW* 12). Reluctantly, her aunt agrees to let the Trillons stay, after Jemima Ann makes the case that it would not be right for a small child to be left unattended at a hotel while her mother works, and offers instead to watch Snowball herself.

Mimi Trillon is described as a colourful, feisty character, "the famous bare-back rider and trapeze performer, of whom all the world has heard" (*LW* 6). Jemima Ann is struck by her flawless good looks, and becomes enamoured of both Mimi and Snowball, despite her dislike of Mimi's vulgar habits. Mimi "imbib[es] freely" (*LW* 14), "smokes with gusto while she drives" (*LW* 17) and shocks the puritanical town of Clangville, New England, while she is there. Retribution takes its toll when Mimi Trillon takes too much wine before walking the high wire, and falls to her death. When no living relative can be located, Snowball is charitably taken in by a Canadian family, the MacDonalds. There is speculation that George Valentine, the man who accompanies her to the MacDonald family, is her actual father.

Of the three novels discussed here, *Lost For a Woman* conveys the strongest anti-marriage sentiment. Mimi Trillon, who is wined and dined by men who are fascinated by her, tells Jemima-Ann, "I have had enough of men and matrimony. They're a mistake, Jemima. The game isn't worth the candle. [...] At the very best, it's not worth it" (*LW* 14). Although Mimi is portrayed as a reckless mother, and is killed off in the narrative, her counsel to Jemima-Ann will foreshadow the fate of her daughter. Her point of view on marriage is thus given some credence in the novel. The wise character George Valentine is described as "know[ing] he will never marry—his one brief, disastrous experience has put an end forever to all thought of that" (*LW* 452). Sentiments like these are conventional for women, as Helen Waite Papashvily points out in her early study on American domestic novels. "The small crimes of men," she says, are the main preoccupations of domestic fiction, and among the small crimes she lists:

> their propensity to make noise and dirt and war and trouble—the insensitivity, the violence, the lust inherent in the masculine character might sometimes be overlooked, but readers and writers and their unifying symbol, the heroines, could never forget how a man boasted and swaggered and threatened and promised and commanded—nor ever forgive that in the end he failed.
>
> No man, fortunately for his peace of mind, ever discovered that the domestic novels were handbooks of another kind of feminine revolt—that these pretty tales reflected and encouraged a pattern of feminine behavior so quietly ruthless, so subtly vicious. (Papashvily xvi-xvii)

Domestic fiction dramatizes the difficulties women experience with men as a reflex of the way patriarchal society has been set up. Although Papashvily perhaps overstates the case by suggesting the representations of writers of domestic fiction were "quietly ruthless, subtly vicious," one-sided, and domineering, it still seems clear that the conventions of domestic fiction sought to raise questions, through subtleties of plot and character, about gender roles as they were being enacted in some middle-class and upper middle-class circles.

Generally, domestic fiction planted questions about relations between the sexes in the minds of its readers from the wife's viewpoint. Different authors, as Papashvily shows, resorted to different narrative means for dealing with their common theme: "Mrs. Hentz[28] maimed the husband. Mrs. Southworth removed him entirely" (115). Fleming, I would add to this list, had her heroines flee from their husbands. In *Lost for a Woman*, a cynical narrative unfolds, depicting marriage as restrictive for women as the nunnery: "marriage or convents are states women are born to choose between" (Fleming, *LW* 270). And yet, ironically, despite Fleming's strong anti-marriage message, *Lost for a Woman* compromises on her convictions and yields to the limitations of the genre by implying, at the novel's end, that her heroine is set to marry again.

In a strange turn of events, again brought about by confusion about family heritage, Mrs. Valentine, George's wealthy mother from whom he is completely estranged, believes that she is Snowball's grandmother. Mrs. Valentine is tended to by her nephew, Vane, who travels with her out of a selfish desire to secure his future inheritance from her. Snowball is delighted to meet up with the woman who presents herself as her grandmother, and ostensibly to discover her family heritage. Eventually, Snowball even agrees to marry the distasteful Vane Valentine in order to please her grandmother. Mrs. Valentine insists on the marriage because she finds it socially and morally convenient to leave her wealth to Snowball if she is married to Vane, because of Snowball's illegitimacy. These events set up what Papashvily calls the "loveless marriage," in which characters agree to marry to save or help the family in some way. In the crucial scene in which Snowball must decide whether to marry Vane Valentine, the narrator satirically weighs the choice between marrying for love or marrying for (parental) convenience or, indeed, not marrying at all:

> To have a choice of her own, to fall in love—could anything be in worst taste, be more vulgar, more glaringly outre and indelicate? Papa and mamma decide the alliance, there is an interview at ten, under maternal *surveillance* during which monsieur is supposed to sit, and look and long, and mademoiselle to be mute and demure, and ready to accept the goods her gods provide. If monsieur be tolerably young, and agreeable, and good to look upon, so much the better; if he be old, sans teeth, sans hair, sans wit, sans everything but money, so much the worse. But appeal there can hardly be any from parental authority. There is always the cloister; yes, but what will you? We all cannot

> have a vocation for the nun's veil and the convent grille. And these very old husbands do not live forever! (Fleming, *LW* 269)

Such a frank discussion suggests that women had little or no influence in the matter of their own marriages, and it mocks the criteria for making such a big decision. In asides such as these, Fleming makes explicit her awareness and criticism of gendered convention and the appropriate "practices of femininity" demanded in life-altering situations.

Snowball continually muses on the state of womanhood and the necessity of marriage: "One must marry, it seems; it appears to be a state of being no properly regulated young lady can hope to escape" (Fleming, *LW* 271). Once married, Snowball realizes that she has made a fatal mistake: "Life seems to have come to an end. It came to an end for her on the day it begins for other girls—her wedding day" (Fleming, *LW* 341). Here again, the narrator draws the sharp contrast between the patriarchal basis of marriage and its conventional use in domestic fiction as the climactic moment of the wedding leading to living happily ever after.

Late in her career, in her last novel, after achieving wealth and fame from her fiction, Fleming seems willing to let down her guard and reveal, through narrative asides to the reader, her personal feelings about the limitations of the genre, especially with regard to the necessity for a happy ending that so often meant a prospective wedding or love. In *The Actress' Daughter*, she complied with convention in the end by reuniting Georgia and Richmond in marriage; in *Carried by Storm*, she partly defies it by showing Joanna alone at the end, but she compromises by holding out the promise of a love overseas to an aristocratic "Earl." In *Lost for a Woman*, Fleming seems to struggle with its ending. Snowball has been protected throughout her life, first by Jemima-Ann, next by her foster-family the MacDonalds, and finally by her grandmother. After her grandmother dies, and Snowball has married Vane Valentine, she realizes how bleak her future appears. She must live with the oppressive decision she has made by marrying an uninteresting, unkind, selfish man under the guise of pleasing her grandmother. Snowball Trillon comes to question the institution of marriage even while apparently succumbing to it abjectly. Once married, Snowball Trillon renounces not only her maiden name, but also her nickname and becomes Dolores Valentine. The name change is symbolic, because it, in a sense, doubles the patriarchal convention that asks women to take their husband's surname upon marriage. Snowball gives up both names that linked her to her ill-fated mother, and her ambiguous roots. Furthermore, the name she assumes, 'Dolores,' literally means sorrow, and thus takes on an almost allegorical association with her mood.

Finally, the secret of Snowball's ancestry is revealed, and Snowball discovers that she had no blood ties to the woman she believed was her grandmother. Snowball, the trapeze artist's daughter, realizes there was no reason for her to marry into the class above her, something that causes many of the problems and humiliations in her marriage. Vane's sister Dorothea and his jilted cousin-love, Camilla Routh, play the ugly stepsisters plotting against Snowball/Dolores, conspiring against her by spreading false rumours about her relationships with Jemima-Ann, whom she had hired as her maid, and with René MacDonald, who often visited her. Camilla's influence over Vane leads to the dismissal of Jemima-Ann, and the refusal to allow René to see Snowball, leaving Snowball isolated in her married life. Furthermore, as Snowball speaks easily with nearby farmers, Camilla and Dorothea repeatedly condescend to her because of what they perceive as her lower-class manners. Vane, instead of gaining breadth by his union with Snowball, according to the convention in domestic fiction as outlined by Nancy Armstrong in which men who marry women "of lower station" often grow into more understanding characters (177), becomes more greedy, and sets his mind to securing the family fortune for himself alone. Immediately upon marrying Snowball, he shows no love, but only takes advantage of her role as his aunt's beneficiary. When her ancestry is revealed, showing there is no bloodline linking her to Mrs. Valentine, Vane becomes furious over his marriage, and his renunciation of his cousin and true love, Camilla Routh. Far from becoming kinder, broader-minded, and more compassionate, Vane becomes harsh and ruthless toward Dolores.

Dolores, like other Fleming heroines before her, realizes she must leave her oppressive marriage. She runs away from Vane, choosing work as a better alternative to her unhappy, restrictive, abusive marriage. As one modern critic has pointed out, "the construction of women as financially dependent ensured the maintenance of patriarchal capitalism, and the association of female independence with immorality was an insidious way of preventing women from attempting to change the status quo" (Warren, "Fracturing" 152). Fleming does not consider the danger and immorality of her protagonists choosing to work, but instead sees it as enabling their personal growth and development. In portraying work for women in a positive light, she takes a stand against patriarchal capitalism.

Snowball flees to London first, where she has arranged to meet Jemima-Ann. Together, Snowball and Jemima-Ann decide to move back to New York where Jemima-Ann has resided, and where they know they will find work. Snowball redefines the boundaries of their relationship in a speech to Jemima-Ann:

> We are going to get on plainly and economically you know, and save our money, and return to New York as soon as may be. And I shall

> wait upon myself after this—we are friends from henceforth, recollect, friends and equals—no more mistress and maid. I shall never be any one's mistress as long as I live, again. "My lady" is dead and buried down there in the dreariness of Valentine. This is Snowball—your friend—who has no friend in the world to whom she can even turn but you, dear old Jim! (Fleming, *LW* 418)

In no uncertain terms, then, Snowball accepts her social position as an equal to Jemima-Ann, and she declares their alliance as friends who will work to support themselves and each other henceforth. Perhaps as a reflection of her own real-life situation, Fleming has Snowball and Jemima-Ann consider what to do should Vane Valentine pursue Snowball and attempt to force her to go back with him. Snowball makes her position very clear: "Better poverty, better hard work, better the worst that life can bring than such death in life as that. [...] The law that takes the part of the husband always against the wife, may do its utmost. I will bear all things, but I will never go back. [...] I don't wonder women go wrong so often through sheer desperation" (Fleming, *LW* 419).

Together, Snowball and Jemima-Ann re-map the domestic plot as they become roommates and co-workers secure in the anonymity of a big city, and outside of the influence of men. Snowball works as a governess while Jemima-Ann takes work as a seamstress, and their harmonious agreement transcends patriarchal and class structures, making the statement that women were capable in the workforce and showing the respectful unions possible given the breaking down of class status.

Fleming does not end the novel on this positive note. She continues the plot until Vane Valentine is within striking distance of Snowball, for whom he has been searching since she left him. But Vane is conveniently drowned in a boating accident, thus setting Snowball completely free. Here the force of convention apparently urges itself on Fleming. The dénouement usually requires marriage, or at least the prospect of it. Snowball's freedom enables her to marry René MacDonald, her Canadian foster-brother, and the apparent true love of her life. Fleming's capituation at this point undoes what is otherwise one of her most plain-spoken tracts. Given the anti-marriage sentiments throughout the novel, across many characters, Snowball's projected romantic love at the end of *Lost for a Woman* leads to questions of what she has learned from her bad marriage, and what message, if any, the novel conveys. In the end, Fleming upholds the purely sentimental notions that true love must be based on long-term friendship and mutual respect, and from those qualities a healthy marriage may result.

I.v The Antidomestic in Domestic Fiction and the Pressure to Conform

As troubled and troubling as marriage proves to be in Fleming's novels, she rarely, if ever, concludes a novel without a marriage, or the promise of one, often in a far-fetched epilogue poorly integrated into the novel which projects a happy future, sometimes even including lofty occupations of future children. Such endings seem to come from outside Fleming—the writer who so boldly depicts female protagonists questioning the necessity of marriage, refusing it when it is carelessly proposed, and running from it when it oppresses them. They appear to be dictated by the genre of domestic fiction and perhaps from the pressure of editors promoting it and readers buying it. Fleming's readers wanted resolution and happy endings, and to deny them that after leading them through the trials and tribulations of long-suffering protagonists would be to risk losing readers for her next novel.[29] Joyce W. Warren makes the case that "women writers who transgressed the conventional code of behaviour for 'respectable' women risked losing the ability to earn a living from their writing" ("Fracturing" 151). Although Fleming fits into this category, she is also an example of a writer who tests convention in the plots of her novels but complies with convention in the resolution of them. While Fleming envisions a more positive and empowered space for women in her novels, she must in the end find a way to imagine it *within* the institution of marriage. Marriage is a crucial element of the genre of domestic fiction, and it provides a clear, secure ending to Fleming's novels as it does for its other practitioners. It belongs to the genre, although it seems like a half-hearted appendage after the main events of the plot. Along with the many women writers of domestic fiction, Fleming imagines for future generations of women what she could not achieve for herself: a partnership where women are physically, emotionally, and financially independent and where men still figure as husbands, but in relationships between equals.

I.vi The Patriarchal Paradigm

One posthumously published novella by Fleming, *Fated to Marry*(1881), depicts, in clear terms, the limitations of femininity and the exploitative nature of gender roles in the nineteenth century. It provides a case against the claim by Helen Waite Papashvily that many writers of domestic fiction wanted to avoid writing about women's own faults and character flaws:

> The philosophy of compromise made little appeal to women. The days of any yielding, of any submission were over. [Domestic fiction's] feminine audience did not want *their* faults discussed, *their* behavior corrected. Equality might have satisfied that vociferous minority agitating far and wide for women's rights but the quiet, sweetly

> smiling ladies at home sought, though perhaps unconsciously, another goal—complete domination. (Papshvily 57)

Yet Papashvily's criticism proves narrow with regard to Fleming's works. In Fleming's novels, many female characters with flawed or even evil intentions are contrasted with the heroine's naïveté, good intentions, or good faith, and some of those female characters either sabotage the heroine's marriage—as Richmond Wildair's mother and cousin do in *The Actress' Daughter*, and Vane Valentine's sister and cousin do in *Lost for a Woman*—or, as is the case in *Fated to Marry*, they do far more desperate things to acquire money and status. Readers are unlikely to identify with these characters, but they exist, and they have no less substance than the good, but hardly less flawed, Sufferers.

Fated to Marry begins with the well-to-do Miss Haldenbrook on her deathbed. Her adopted, orphaned charge, Isabel Vance, expects to be the heir to Miss Haldenbrook's estate, except that she is secretly courting George Wildair, a man Miss Haldenbrook regards as a fortune hunter, and whom she has forbidden Isabel to see. When Miss Haldenbrook discovers Isabel's disobedience, she changes her will. Upon her death, Isabel is surprised to actually be disinherited, and she immediately loses Wildair's love as well, showing the inextricable link between love and money in the novel. Isabel vows that "a fierce and pitiless avenger shall rise in her place. From this hour, let all who have wronged me beware!" (*FM* 11). George Wildair seeks out the actual heiress to Miss Haldenbrook's fortune, a distant young cousin, Amy Earle. Amy is a hopeless romantic who reads far too many sentimental novels. On becoming heir to a fortune about which she previously knew nothing, she tries to find Isabel Vance in order to share the inheritance with her, but she cannot locate her. Amy finds Wildair instead, who courts her and wins her heart, but the night before their marriage, he is murdered. Along comes a mysterious man, Victor Latour, who is dark, mysterious and secretive—everything Amy's romantic soul could imagine.

Victor successfully woos Amy, but on their wedding night, he confesses that he is a monomaniac who intends to murder her if she offends him. From then on, he controls her. He will not allow her to see anyone alone, isolating her from her family and friends and rendering her life miserable. A telegram arrives disclosing the strange disappearance of Isabel Vance, including a photograph of her and a writing sample by her. Amy's neighbour and good family friend Dr. John Sterling discovers that Victor Latour is actually Isabel Vance, cross-dressing and affecting a dual identity in order to secure the inheritance she saw as her own. On having her dual identity discovered, Isabel falls into a serious brain fever from which she soon dies. Amy Earle, third time in wedding gear and still a virgin, marries Dr. Sterling at the end of the novel.

Fated to Marry seems to find Fleming searching for her personal formula in the genre, and I would speculate that while it was posthumously published, it was written earlier than the three novels discussed above.[30] The Sufferer is ambiguously Isabel Vance and Amy Earle. There are no Bullies in the well-defined sense of the other novels discussed here, although the nearest to one is Miss Haldenbrook, and the Gentleman cannot be Wildair, who has no redeeming qualities, and is not exactly Dr. Sterling either, who has only good qualities. None of the stereotyped roles is as clearly defined as they would later become.

Moreover, the source of conflict is different. In *Fated to Marry*, Fleming shows the effect of one woman's victimization of another woman, but it is not only Amy Earle victimized by Isabel Vance. When Miss Haldenbrook leaves Isabel Vance destitute by renouncing her in her will, her sense of absolute control over Isabel is derived from having raised the orphaned girl, and in having the means to secure or, as the case is, to deny her financial well-being. Miss Haldenbrook exerts her control within the paradigm of patriarchy. She attempts to superimpose her will on Isabel, and destroys her when she fails.

Destitute and desperate, Isabel reenacts that sense of oppression upon Amy Earle in a most psychotic way. First, Isabel avenges George Wildair for betraying her. George Wildair is Amy Earle's fiancé and Isabel shoots him the night before they are to be married: "Tomorrow is your wedding day, George Wildair, but tomorrow's sun will surely rise on a widowed bride. Traitor! Perjuror! Take your doom!" (*FM* 32). Next, Isabel poses as Victor Latour, a mysterious man "of French descent from Canada" who courts Amy Earle and convinces her to marry him quickly (*FM* 41). Once married, Isabel, disguised as Victor, effectively imprisons Amy by isolating her from friends and family who are concerned about her and her impetuous marriage to a strange man.

Oppression, control, and cruelty rule these women's lives, and their vindictive, competitive natures determine the action of the plot. In Fleming's fictional world, women oppress other women within patriarchal social structures, enacting melodramatic extremes of murder, cross-dressing, and multiple identities. *Fated to Marry* is thus different than *The Actress' Daughter*, *Carried By Storm*, and *Lost for a Woman*, which take their heroines outside of the patriarchal paradigm and show them succeeding independently there. Instead, in *Fated To Marry*, Miss Haldenbrook's inability to support Isabel's love for George Wildair leads her to control Isabel's fate through finances, which leads to George's eventual demise, and Amy's "fate" to marry the elusive Victor Latour, as well as Isabel's "fate" to disguise herself as Latour and marry Amy to secure her own financial future. Whoever has the wealth controls the fate of others, and in this case, Fleming depicts Miss Haldenbrook with the wealth and the desire for control over Isabel. *Fated to Marry* is the same as the other novels, however, in one respect: here as elsewhere the plot resolves in marriage, with Amy Earle and Dr. John Sterling destined (perhaps) for a lifetime of connubial bliss.

I.vii Achieving Notoriety in Popular Fiction

Richard Brodhead, in his work on the growing American readership of the nineteenth century, explains the evolution of the word "popular" as a means of describing literature:

> [T]he literary-historical meaning of the new mass-market novels of the 1850s is not just that they were more popular than earlier books but that they mark a historical change in the meaning of the word *popular*, a term that now comes to denote not just "well-liked" or "widely read" but specifically production *into* a certain market status through the commercial management of a book's public life. The new promotional campaigns mounted by the publishers of such works to an altogether new extent produced public demand for them, demand which was then republicized as a way of creating further demand. (56-57)

Although Fleming was not directly involved in the commercial promotion of her books, she knew that in order to earn a living through writing, she had to initiate herself into the popular market of the day. Brodhead considers the birth of spin, or the marketing campaigns used to advertise popular literature, and the front matter of *Carried By Storm* gives an example of this phenomenon in relation to Fleming: "Mrs. Fleming's stories are growing more and more popular every day. Their delineations of character, life-like conversations, flashes of wit, constantly varying scenes, and deeply interesting plots, combine to place their author in the very first rank of Modern Novelists." This blurb suggests that there is momentum surrounding Fleming's writing, since her works grow in popularity by the day. It also anoints Fleming as a "popular" writer, and it spells out the reasons for her success—interestingly, it names exactly the qualities that modernists would come to scorn in domestic fiction.

As I have said, Fleming was a product of the era in which she was writing. As industrialism in America progressed, the middle- and upper-middle-classes grew, leisure time and literacy rates increased, causing a boom and a change in the literary industry (Elliott 698). There were suddenly more readers, and they demanded more diversity on the market (Papashvily 37). Brodhead describes the literary growth as a function of the rise of the middle-class in the middle of the nineteenth century:

> the steep escalation of literary sales figures around 1850 must be understood to have reflected not only improved production factors like cheaper printing technologies or more active marketing campaigns, but quite as essentially the historical creation of a new social *place* or *need* for literary entertainment to fill. The mass-market novels of the 1850s address middle-class domesticity because it was above all the institution of this social formation that created for literature its new mid-nineteenth-century place. (53-54)

Fleming, as an avid young reader in New Brunswick in her girlhood, dreamed of creating the fiction she loved to read, and trained herself through rigorous, self-imposed practice to put on paper the literary effects she admired. In writing to fill the entertainment needs of a new social class, Fleming seized the opportunity to create new visions of womanhood and of class that were fundamentally based on equality. While some domestic fiction was written about and for particular classes and reinforced rather than sought to change class ideology, Fleming's novels show, at least in part, the possibilities of freedom through the workforce and financial autonomy for women. In *Lost for a Woman*, *Carried By Storm*, and *The Actress' Daughter*, Fleming develops female protagonists from impoverished backgrounds who become charitable cases adopted into the middle class, who may marry into the social class above them, but whose self-fulfillment often comes from some independent, often lucky discovery of innate resources that allow them to rise out of poverty. Fleming upheld the escape fantasy through unrealistic, often long-lost wealthy family members, usually in order to secure a happy marital union or reunion in the novel's conclusion. Still, Fleming's ideal of equality requires her heroines to strike out on their own in order to prove their worth.

Gender and class are inextricably linked as social constructions writers of domestic fiction sought to challenge and ultimately change. Middle-class women's lives, particularly those of married women, were dependent on men's wages, charity, and kindness. As such, women were considered second-class or second-rate (the "second sex," as Simone de Beauvoir named it). To attain autonomy and to prove their worth, Fleming's protagonists must escape marriages and find work to support themselves. Although the working conditions for women were also second-rate, Fleming's heroines surmount those conditions by developing qualities in themselves that were previously untapped, and in so doing, they become independent of men. In the end, Fleming's heroines either reconcile on new terms with the men who previously scorned them, or find new husbands who believe in their worth. Such endings resolve the plot neatly, but they do not ring true in the context of the marital complications that have preceded them.

The genre that Fleming and others worked in required a happy ending for domestic fiction, and the endings of *Lost for a Woman* and *Carried by Storm* fit the formula. In the case of *Fated to Marry*, the woman's fated marriage is thwarted by the actions of her benefactor, a woman interestingly put in the same powerful position as a man, with the power to oppress her charge in the same ways as a patriarch might. The overriding message is that patriarchal systems and male dominance over social institutions create environments within which women must take extreme measures if they are to grow and thrive.

It is not surprising that Fleming gives the impression of being simply and wholly a demure housewife to a newspaper reporter visiting her home. It apparently comes from the same reflex that led her to end her novels happily, with marriage as a resolution or a happy prospect. In her art and in her life, Fleming acted predictably and appropriately. In her life, there would be no happy marital ending, but in her fiction there had to be. While some threads in her narratives question and challenge social institutions and hierarchies, Fleming ultimately had to bow to the demands of the market. For doing so she was rewarded both in economic terms and in recognition as a popular writer in her day.

One can see how Fleming's literary aspirations were subjugated to her material needs. Early in her writing career, Fleming chose to write in the genre of gothic romance, but she soon shifted to domestic fiction, which shows her awareness of literary trends and her ability to adapt. In turn, the market of American popular fiction influenced how Fleming envisioned social reform with regard to women's autonomy beyond the confines of marriage, and how she criticized, but ultimately followed, the conventions of the genre to concluding, happy marriages.

It is worth remembering that Fleming developed and nurtured her literary reputation by writing about women's liberation from restrictive domestic spaces. The paradoxes Fleming faced in her life and in her writing reflected the times: the public practices of gender appeared to be fixed from a hierarchical, patriarchal base, while imaginings in women's writing exposed them as falling apart or requiring change. Domestic fiction now seems an outmoded literary genre, but the social tensions in Fleming's novels reveal an antipatriarchal, at times antidomestic, sensibility. Fleming's biography suggests the motivation for the social changes she imagined in the popular genre of domestic novels. In a sense, she lived in the conditions that she envisioned. Her success as a writer came from not only a proclivity for spinning plots and characters that appealed to her audience of middle-class women, but also from her ability to recognize and challenge, if only mildly, the condition of femininity in the nineteenth century.

Notes

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[1] The graphic from Armstrong, pp.18-19, reads as follows:

Husband	**Wife**
Gets goods	Gather them together and save them
Travel, seeking a living	Keep the house
Get money and provisions	Do not vainly spend it
Deal with many men	Talk with few
Be "entertaining"	Be solitary and withdrawn
Be skillful in talk	Boast of silence
Be a giver	Be a saver
Apparel yourself as you may	Apparel yourself as it becomes you
Dispatch all things outdoors	Oversee and give order within

[2] Because no exhaustive nineteenth-century American periodical index exists, it has been a challenge to find information on some of the early American periodicals in which Fleming published. For such periodicals, I have relied on library catalogues for dates and any cursory information about them. The Harvard University library database, which contains the largest collection of early periodicals, identifies the *Sunday Mercury* as a story paper published out of Philadelphia from 1852-65. (<http://www.lib.harvard.edu/catalogs/hollis.html>).

[3] The *Boston Pilot*, a periodical categorized under the keywords "Literary and Catholic Sentinel" ran from 1836-57 (<http://www.lib.harvard.edu/catalogs/hollis.html>). These dates are confirmed in *Catholic Serials of the Nineteenth Century in the United States: A Descriptive Bibliography and Union List*, eds. Eugene P. Willing and Herza Hatzfeld, second series: part 10 Massachusetts (Washington, DC: Catholic University of American Press, 1965): 12-13. The *Boston Pilot* marketed itself to Irish immigrants and to Catholics, advertising as follows: "*The Pilot* is the only paper devoted to the interests of the Holy Catholic Church and those many strangers in a strange land [...]; we hope for [...] a response from every Irishman and every Catholic" (Willing 13). The *Boston Pilot* became *The Pilot* and continued publishing from 1858-1964 (Willing 12).

[4] The *Metropolitan Record* was an early New York "Saturday weekly paper" that was published from 29 January 1859-29 May 1864, and it is listed in the category of "Catholic Church Periodicals" (Willing 100-02; http://www.lib.harvard.edu/catalogs/hollis.html).

[5] McMullen notes the publishing history of Beadle and Adams: "The Beadle brothers–Erastus, Irwin, and James– first worked for other printers before setting up Beadle and Brothers Stereotype Foundry in New York. In 1858 Erastus joined with Robert Adams in the magazine business and in 1860 they began publishing dime novels. In 1862 they bought Irwin, who was operating as Beadle and Co., and the company, thereafter known as Beadle and Adams, became a great publishing success" (McMullen *Silenced*, n11 213).

[6] *Dem Irrlicht Gefolgt* was published in 1896.

[7] There are also four mysterious titles which are attributed to Fleming as the "supposed author" which may well *not* be by her. For example, *Clifton; or Modern fashions, politics, and morals*, and *Hates and Loves*. There are also two novels listed by Fleming as translated into German, *Dem Irrlicht gefolgt* and *Eines Weibes Martyrium*, both published in 1896.

[8] There is very little information on *Saturday Night* which was published out of Philadelphia. It may have run from 1824, as one periodical listing from the Harvard library website appeared to have, but there is no information to verify its location or the length of its run.

[9] The *London Journal and Weekly Record of Literature, Science, and Art* ran from 1 March 1845-28 April 1906. It became the *New London Journal* from 5 May 1906-8 May 1909; it resumed as the *London Journal* from 15 May 1909-January 1912. It is described as a "family magazine," a "widely read publication in England in the 1840s and 1850s." In the 1860s, most serial installments were written by women. It had a "circulation of 500 000 copies per issue" (North 2998-99).

[10] The United States Copyright Office explains the history of copyright law in the U.S.:

> The Constitution gives Congress the power to enact laws establishing a system of copyright in the U.S. Congress enacted the first Federal Copyright law in May 1790, and the first work was registered within two weeks. Originally, claims were recorded by Clerks of the U.S. District courts. Not until 1870 were copyright functions centralized in the Library of Congress under the direction of the then Librarian of Congress, Ainsworth Rand Spofford. The Copyright Office became a separate department of the Library of Congress in 1897, and Thorvald Solberg was appointed the first Register of Copyrights. (Library of Congress, United States Copyright Office, 19 June 2003,http://www.loc.gov/copyright).

[11] According to the Harvard library database, the *New York Weekly* ran from 1850-76 (<http://www.lib.harvard.edu/catalogs/hollis.html>).

[12] Susan Coultrap-McQuin describes Robert Bonner (1839-99), the successful editor of the *New York Ledger*, as a complex figure in the world of nineteenth-century American publishing:

> At his death in 1899, Bonner himself was worth $6 million, an amount far beyond the dreams of most Gentlemen Publishers. In fact, he has been more often compared to the showman, P.T. Barnum, than to the other Gentlemen Publishers because, like Barnum, Bonner was exceptionally good at advertising. He tried all sorts of innovative, sometimes questionable advertising schemes, filling entire pages of other papers (he never allowed advertising in his own) with catchy phrases, sample stories, or claims that everyone, including Queen Victoria and President Franklin Pierce, was reading the *Ledger*. [...] In fact, he was known to spend $20,000 a week on advertising. He also lured readers by announcing that he was paying such astonishing sums as $30,000 to Henry Ward Beecher for *Norwood*, [...] and $5,000

> to Alfred, Lord Tennyson for a single poem. He proudly pointed out that Lydia H. Sigourney, Fanny Fern, and Sylvanus Cobb, Jr., were *Ledger* exclusives, and that his list of contributors also included such writers as Louisa May Alcott, Harriet Beecher Stowe, and Horace Greeley. [...]
>
> But the other side of his personality aligned him to the Gentlemen Publishers. Like them, his values were grounded in nineteenth-century idealism and didacticism. [...] In his private life, he was extremely upright; he never drank, smoked, or swore. (69-70)

[13] Emma Dorothy Eliza Nevitte (E.D.E.N.) Southworth lived from 1818-1899. According to Amy E. Hudock, she wrote over forty novels in her forty-four year career, and she had consistent best-sellers. She was perhaps the most popular American writer, male or female, of her generation. Hudock credits Southworth with "entering the American consciousness." Her novels were made into "popular plays [and, through her writing] she shaped fashion trends, and developed women's visions of themselves." (*E.D.E.N. Southworth Page*. Ed. Amy E. Hudock. 3 July 2002 <http://webpages.marshall.edu/~hudock1/southworth.html>.)

[14] Carole Gerson's article also outlines payment for editorial, journalistic work and individual poems published in serials. Ethelwyn Wetherald's editorial work on *The World's Best Literature* "was well paid, at $18 a week" in 1895-96 (109). Gerson found that there were many gaps in discovering how people were paid for their literary works. Through letters, she found that "the *Youth's Companion* paid William Wilfred Campbell $10 or $15 a poem [...] a rate consistent with the $10, $12, or $15 paid to L.M. Montgomery, Isabel Ecclestone Mackay, and Marjory Pickthall over the next two decades" (112). Carole Gerson "Canadian Women Writers and American Markets, 1880-1940" *Context North America: Canadian/U.S. Literary Relations*, Ed. Camille R. La Bossière (Ottawa: U of Ottawa Press, 1994): 107-18.

[15] R. G. Moyles' bibliography of Fleming finds twenty-seven titles appear for the first time in novel form posthumously, having been published in American journals serially in Fleming's lifetime (133). However, McMullen's research indicates that "[m]any of the novels published after [Fleming's] death can be traced to earlier publication dates, and most were published by her own publishers: the *New York Weekly*, Street and Smith, William Carleton, and later, Dillingham, which took over the Carleton list" (McMullen "Checklist," 28).

[16] Reprinting under different titles occasionally occurred when different publishers reprinted Fleming's early novels, but it also happened by the same publisher: *Sybil Campbell; or the Queen of the Isle*. New York: Beadle 1861. Published as *An Awful Mystery* (New York: Beadle, 1875) and as *The Queen of the Isle* (New York: Dillingham, 1886). The *Twin Sisters; or, the Wronged Wife's Hate*. New York: Beadle, 1864. Published as *The Rival Brothers*. New York: Beadle, 1875. *Victoria; or, The Heiress of Castle Cliffe*. New York: Brady, [1864]. Published as *Unmasked*. New York: Beadle, 1870. (Moyles 133)

[17] That being said, bibliographies of Fleming's works can be found in three sources. The most comprehensive is Lorraine McMullen's "A Checklist of the Works of May Agnes Fleming." *Papers of*

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the Bibliographical Society of Canada.(XXVIII: Toronto, 1989): 25-37. There is also R.G. Moyles' *English-Canadian Literature to 1900: A Guide to Information Sources*, (Detroit: Gale Research, 1976): 133-36. As well, Lorraine McMullen's *Dictionary of Literary Biography* entry "May Agnes Fleming." *DLB* Vol. 99 Ed. W.H. New. (Detroit: Gale, 1990): 103-05, contains a bibliography.

[18] McMullen notes that Francis S. Street was a witness to the will (*Silenced* 69). That Street and Smith were included as witness and executor of Fleming's will is evidence of their status as "Gentlemen Publishers" who extended business as well as emotional support to their writers, or at least to Fleming.

[19] For example, in his article "Wanted–Canadian Criticism," modernist critic A.J.M. Smith concludes with the infamous line, "Sensibility is no longer enough, intelligence is also required. Even in Canada" (601).

[20] Nathaniel Hawthorne was an American novelist and short story writer who lived from 1804-64 (Drabble 253). He wrote a letter to his publisher, William Ticknor in 1855 in which he complained about the rise in popularity of women writers, whom he complained were stealing his readership: "America is now wholly given over to a damned mob of scribbling women, and I should have no chance of success while the public taste is occupied with their trash–and should be ashamed of myself if I did succeed" (qtd. in Tompkins 217).

[21] Douglas' work has prompted much scholarly debate, and several studies are indebted to her work, some of which I will list here: Nina Baym, *Woman's Fiction: A Guide to Novels by and about Women in America 1820-70* (Urbana: U of Illinois P, 1978); Jane Tompkins, *Sensational Designs: The Cultural Work of American Fiction 1790-1860* (New York: Oxford UP, 1985); Gillian Brown, *Domestic Individualism: Imagining Self in Nineteenth-Century America* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990); Shirley Samuels, ed., *The Culture of Sentiment: Race, Gender, and Sentimentality in Nineteenth-Century America* (New York: Oxford UP, 1992); Joyce W. Warren, ed., *The (Other) American Traditions: Nineteenth-Century Women Writers* (New Brunswick: Rutgers UP, 1993); Lora Romero, *Home Fronts: Domesticity and Its Critics in the Antebellum United States* (Durham: Duke UP, 1997); Cathy N. Davidson and Jessamyn Hatcher, eds., *No More Separate Spheres! A Next Wave American Studies Reader* (Durham: Duke UP, 2002).

[22] In some of Fleming's novels, she even re-uses character names, which further complicates discussions of characters. In *Fated to Marry*, there is a character named George Wildair who is not the same character as George Wildair of *Lost for a Woman*. Similarly, in *Fated to Marry*, the protagonist is named Isabel Vance, but she is not the same as Isabel Vansel, a minor character with almost the same name in *A Wife's Tragedy*.

[23] Some examples of this phenomenon include Charlotte Brontë's eponymous Jane Eyre, the conniving Becky Sharp from Thackeray's *Vanity Fair*, and Harriet, the poor orphan Emma Woodhouse unsuccessfully attempts to set up beyond her social status in Jane Austen's *Emma*.

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[24] Hagar is a Biblical figure from the book of Genesis 16.21. Hagar was an Egyptian maid to Sarah, the wife of Abraham. Sarah could not have children, and so Hagar bore Ishmael to Abraham. Later, God found favour with Abraham and Sarah, and when he was 100 and she was 90, they had a son, Isaac. Ishmael scoffed at the ostentatious ceremony for Isaac, which upset Sarah, who had Hagar and Ishmael banished. In the New Testament, in a letter from St. Paul to the Galatians, he uses the example of Hagar to teach law versus grace. "Hagar in the Wilderness" represents Georgia at her lowest point, but there is hope for her future.

[25] In recent scholarship, writers have focused on Hagar's racial ethnicity as a black Egyptian woman. The symbolic reference of Hagar portrays internalized racism, as in Toni Morrison's *Song of Solomon* when the character Hagar is passed over by Milkman in favour of a mulatta woman. Cf. Janet Gabler-Hover, *Dreaming Black/Writing White: The Hagar Myth in American Cultural History*, Lexington: UP of Kentucky, 2000. Gabler-Hover's work chronicles the use of Hagar by women in the nineteenth century to show that for white feminists, Hagar became a symbol of liberation as she empowered women against patriarchal restrictions, which is how Fleming, too, uses her. However, given the complexity of Hagar's racial ethnicity, Gabler-Hover considers the insidious devaluation of black women through these characterizations.

[26] The full quotation from Milton reads as follows:

> The world was all before them, where to choose.
> Their place of rest, and Providence their guide:
> They hand in hand with wandring steps and slow
> Through Eden took their solitarie way. (Milton *PL*, Bk.12, ll. 646-649)

[27] Cf. Elaine Showalter, *The Female Malady: Women, Madness, and English Culture, 1830-1980*. New York: Pantheon, 1985.

[28] Mrs. Caroline Lee Hentz was the mother of five children, the wife of Nicholas Marcellus Hentz with whom she ran a boarding school for young women. She began publishing domestic fiction in 1831 out of Cincinnati, and was a contemporary of Harriet Beecher Stowe (Papashvily 61-4).

[29] In her article "Fracturing Gender: Woman's Economic Independence," Joyce W. Warren makes a case that "women writers deliberately modified their writing to conform to social prescriptions of femininity" by citing the careers of Kate Chopin and Lydia Maria Child, two writers whose careers as writers were effectively over after they wrote outside of the conventions of writing for women (151). Kate Chopin's novella *The Awakening* was published in 1899 and depicts a woman who commits adultery, leaves her children and her husband as she searches for personal autonomy. After publication, editors refused to accept Chopin's stories. Lydia Maria Child was a popular writer whose career changed with the publication of a pamphlet *An Appeal in Favor of that Class of Americans Called Africans* in 1833. Child worked for an abolitionist newspaper and wrote about the social injustices to African-Americans and pointed out the anti-Christian ideas behind such unjust treatment. Her newspaper writing was at times praised in the North, but was always harshly criticized in the southern U.S. (Warren 151).

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[30] Although it is speculative, given the complicated nature of Fleming's publications (i.e. their re-publishings under different titles), it is easy to imagine that some of her posthumous publications, and *The Actress' Daughter* is also one, were written much earlier than their publication dates.

CHAPTER TWO

"The Pioneer is forced to fall behind": The Public Self, Genre, and Nationalism in the Works of Susie Frances Harrison

> Do I hold my life in my hand,
> To make or to mar,
> To rise or to fall;
> To round to the perfect ball,
> To mould to the matchless star?
> Seranus, *The Canadian Birthday Book* (1887)

"It is not, I hope, that I am sensitive to criticism, but—I really have had so hard a struggle to place my work properly—that I grow almost nervous over *anthologies* and the like. Look at this idiot in 'Munsey's' calling me 'cold' and 'artificial'!" So wrote Susie Frances Harrison in reply to American critic Edmund C. Stedman,[1] who had written for permission to include some of her poems in his new collection, to be called *A Victorian Anthology* (Harrison letter to Stedman, 16 May 1895). Harrison's sense of self-importance comes through in this comment, but so too, between the lines, does a sense of vulnerability.

At the end of the letter, she appends a biographical sketch, "contributed by a friend, of course," which describes her, under her *nom de plume* Seranus, in these glowing terms: "As poet, musician, composer, and prose writer, the name of 'Seranus' is identified with all that is artistic in the life of the Dominion. A woman of undoubted genius, whose work shows culture, forced self-restraint, and imagination, her poetry calls for special notice, as it illustrates passions, emotions, and experiences undealt with by other Canadian writers" (Harrison letter to Stedman, 16 May 1895). The author of the sketch, the "friend," is unidentified, and it is not difficult to imagine that it might have been written by Harrison herself. Unlike many of her contemporaries, Harrison worked hard at promoting her work. She had a sense of herself as a prime contributor to literature and culture in early Canada. The biographical sketch, written out for Stedman in Harrison's own script and attributed so vaguely as to its authorship, quite naturally arouses some suspicions.

The epigraph to this chapter is taken from Seranus's second publication, *The Canadian Birthday Book*, a book of days she edited, with a verse for each day of the year. In 1887, when she published it, aphoristic daybooks were popular. True to form, Harrison made a case in her preface for the inherent value of her book compared to others: "The little book I have the honour to present to a Canadian public," she wrote, "deserves to be welcomed as the only existing publication where, between the same covers, may be found carefully selected specimens of French and English Canadian verse" (*CBB* 3). As her literary career developed, Harrison's reputation rested partly on her success in representing scenes of French Canada in her English poems. It is a prescient gesture in the direction of national unity at a time when the two cultures had relatively little contact with one another.

Harrison does include a few British poets in *The Canadian Birthday Book*, and she explains their presence in terms of their service to Canada:

> I have felt that it would be not only courteous but a matter of great interest and value to us in Canada and to other countries, where I trust the book will go, to include some extracts from the fine group of poems suggested by Canadian subjects to that noble poet who has the interests of Canada so truly at heart—the Right Hon. The Marquis of Lorne, K.C.M.G.; and I have ventured to take a similar liberty by including in my compilation some of Lord Dufferin's verse—than whom Canada has no warmer friend—and also several stanzas from the pen of a cultured lady member of his household. (*CBB* 4)

Lord Dufferin was governor general of Canada in 1872-78. He was the first governor general to make the Quebec Citadel his residence, and his term of office included the Pacific Scandal,[2] which led him to call for the resignation of Sir John A. Macdonald, and the Red River Rebellion, in which he granted amnesty to the Métis rebels. The Marquis of Lorne, John Douglas Campbell Sullivan, succeeded Dufferin as governor general in 1878-83, in politically quieter times. He founded the Royal Society of Canada, and he instituted the Canadian Academy of Arts, which survives today as the National Gallery of Canada (Finkel et al. 44-50).

Harrison's inclusion of French and English poetry in the same Canadian anthology, and her use in the same volume of some "Canadian-friendly" British aristocrat-poets is consistent with her agenda as an early Canadian writer and nationalist, which I discuss in this chapter. Her nationalism is a motivating force in her work, but not so overarching that she is willing to subordinate her ambitions as a writer. She does, after all, place the poem I have used as the epigraph squarely at the beginning, on January 1st, of the *Canadian Birthday Book*.[3] Such bold management of her public self would prove typical of Harrison, even though her literary reputation never quite attained the heights she believed she deserved.

Harrison's ambition also showed in her willingness to attempt several genres, including some that were not characteristically practiced by women. In "Genre and Gender," Mary Eagleton argues that many women writers in Harrison's day and earlier were relegated to producing private forms of writing such as letters, diaries, journals, and domestic fiction. Male-dominated genres, "high tragedy, epic poetry, sermons, the philosophical treatise, [and] criticism," tended to attract more serious notice and critical praise. Eagleton notes, "The female forms, we have been told, are less literary, less intellectual, less wide-ranging, less profound" (252). Yet Harrison pushed the boundaries of genre, writing in a variety of intellectually rigorous genres including opera, short stories, villanelles, sonnets, lyrics, novels, criticism and journalistic opinion pieces. She struggled to find publishers for her works, and while the reasons for this may be various, gender and genre discrimination are surely among them. It is also likely that she suffered from national discrimination, since Harrison wrote almost exclusively about Canadians and Canadian life. The major publishing centres were in New York and London, and the reading public was in the United States and Britain. Harrison's predilection for cultivating Canada and choosing genres that were considered high literature and perhaps even "masculine" bear witness to her determination to make her reputation as a serious writer and to elevate Canadian literature and culture in doing so.

In this chapter, I add to the recovered biography of Susie Frances Harrison based on my archival research and meetings with two of her descendants. I also examine the nineteenth-century Canadian literary scene to show the obstacles and challenges of the small market to a growing field, and especially as it concerned women writers. This chapter looks in-depth at Harrison's nationalism as it is portrayed in two forms: the villanelle, for which she became known, and the political novel. Harrison's rendition of the villanelle proves dated in its appeal, partly because of her agenda in creating character sketches of French-Canadians, but also because of the transformation in tone of the genre, as I discuss. The two novels I explore, *The Forest of Bourg-Marie* and the unpublished *Search for a Canadian* forward a national picture which expresses the concern for uniting the fragmented political community that made up Canada motivated by the fear of annexation by the U.S. and colonial neglect from Britain.

II.i A Canadian Life in Music and Letters

While some scholars[4] have worked on Harrison, in my archival research, I have been able to piece together further details of her life. On February 24, 1859, just eight years prior to Confederation, Susan Frances Riley was born in Toronto, Ontario. She was the only child of John and Frances Riley. Her mother, Frances (Drought) Riley, came from Dublin. Her father, John Byron Riley, was Irish-Canadian, a native of Quebec, and proprietor of Revere House, an inn in Toronto (Willison 80). Susie Riley attended private school in Toronto, and studied piano under Frederic Boscovitz (Keillor ms. 2). At the age of fifteen, she attended boarding school in Montreal.

By 1875, when she was sixteen years old, articles and poetry by Susie Riley began appearing in such papers as *Canadian Illustrated News,*[5] Stewart's *Literary Quarterly Magazine* (NB),[6] *Belford's Monthly*, and *Rose-Belford's Canadian Monthly and National Review*,[7] mostly under the pseudonym "Medusa" (Keillor ms. 2). Harrison also wrote journalism under the *nom de plume* "The Rambler," in the form of letters written to newspapers about current events (Harrison letter to

Stedman 16 May 1895). She is also said to have published early "potboiler" stories in *Nash's Pall Mall Magazine*[8] and *American Magazine*[9] (Leigh 110-11). Harrison moved back to Montreal to attend classes at McGill University, and, according to Ethelwyn Wetherald, who wrote an article about her for *The Week*, she "was a favourite pupil of Professor Clark Murray's mental philosophy class" ("Seranus" 267).

Throughout her life, Harrison wrote musical compositions, at first under the pseudonyms "Gilbert King" and "G. R." In 1882, while visiting Liverpool, Harrison adopted the pen name "Seranus," which, according to Wetherald, originated when an English woman misread her signature "S. Frances" ("Seranus" 267). From then on, "Seranus" became Harrison's pseudonym for both musical compositions and early literary works, and she signed most letters "S. Frances Harrison" with "Seranus" scrawled underneath.

In 1879, Susie Frances met and married John William Frederick Harrison, an Englishman from Bristol who had moved to Canada five years earlier. John Harrison was also a musician, an organist for St. George's Anglican church in Ottawa, a pianist, and a conductor; he was twelve years older than his wife. Soon after they married, they settled in Ottawa, where John Harrison re-activated the Ottawa Philharmonic Society, which had been founded some ten years earlier.[10] The years spent in Ottawa, 1879-1886, proved busy and fruitful for Susie Frances Harrison. She performed her own musical compositions in concerts, singing and playing the piano.[11] She also worked as the Ottawa correspondent for *The Detroit Free Press* and wrote short stories. And she gave birth to two children, Frederick John Lang and Frances Maria.

In 1886, the Harrison family moved to Toronto, where they converted their home into the Rosedale branch of the Royal Conservatory of Music. Harrison also edited *The Week: A Canadian Journal of Politics, Literature, Science and Arts*,[12] from December 1886 to June 1887, during which time she was also its music critic (Gerson, *DLB* 147; Keillor, *EMC* 587). During its thirteen-year run, Harrison published more poems in *The Week* than any other woman, and she was second only to Edward Brownlow, who wrote under the pseudonym Sarepta[13] (Gandolfo 11). Harrison also wrote journalism in both *The Globe* and *The Mail*, and she "obtain[ed] marked commendation from Mr. Charles Belford[14]" for her journalism in *The Mail* (Willison 80).

Immediately after her return to Toronto, Harrison published her first books. Her first collection of short fiction, *Crowded Out! And Other Sketches* was published by the Ottawa Evening Journal Office in 1886. The next year, she published *The Canadian Birthday Book* (1887), and from then on she kept up a steady but modest output. In Harrison's first and largest collection of poetry, *Pine, Rose and Fleur de lis* (1891), she included a series of forty-four villanelles, and she became renowned for her command of the poetic form, her use of which I return to later in this chapter. In 1898, Harrison's first novel, *The Forest of Bourg-Marie* was published. It was sixteen years before Harrison published her second novel, *Ringfield* (1914). In the same period, she published a collection of poetry, *In Northern Skies and Other Poems* (1912), and she published four more small collections in the last years of her career: *Songs of Love and Labor* (1925), *Later Poems and New Villanelles* (1928), *Four Ballads and a Play* (1933), and *Penelope, and Other Poems* (1934). In addition, Harrison wrote at least two other novels that were never published–*The Rock, a Romance of Gaspé Beach* (c.1885), and *Search for a Canadian* (c. 1887)[15]–and she wrote lyrics and librettos as well as the music for several musical compositions including the opera *Pipandor*[16] (c. 1888).

One of Harrison's minor and more ephemeral productions demonstrates rather neatly her nationalist leanings in cultural matters, and especially her respect for French-Canadians, which was possibly unique among the anglophone literary coterie. In 1896-97, Seranus presented a "Recital Lecture on The Music of French Canada," in Toronto, London (Ontario), Montreal, Boston, and New York ("Press Notices"). French-Canadian music and culture would prove a recurring topic in her works. Harrison described her recital, according to an advertisement for the show as "An Entertainment peculiarly suited to Ladies' Clubs–Musical or Literary, Ladies' Colleges, Conventions, Drawing Rooms, etc., etc. Of great interest to all Students of Music and lovers of Folk-Lore. For terms and dates address, 13 Dunbar Road (Rosedale), Toronto" ("Press Notices"). Harrison publishes her home address as the contact for recital bookings.

The recital must have proven successful, to a certain degree, as daily papers and magazines such as *Toronto Saturday Night*, *Montreal Gazette*, *Montreal Daily Star*, *Toronto Mail*, and *The Writer* from Boston published reviews. An excerpt from the *Montreal Daily Star*, gives an impression of the recital:

> The high school Hall was well filled last evening, when Mrs. J.W.F. Harrison (Seranus) gave an interesting lecture on "The Music of French Canada." The lecture was illustrated by selections on the piano by the talented lecturer. Mrs. Harrison considered that the diction of the French Canadian *chansons* was in nearly every case superior to that employed in those English songs which had gained the greatest popularity. The music of French Canada has naturally grown out of that French music which grew gradually out of the plain chant. As a striking illustration of the evolution of what has been called the

> ecclesiastical melody, the lecturer played the melody of a Gregorian Chant, and afterwards a chanson, *"C'était une fregate,"* in which the tune could be distinctly traced, and finally a beautiful arrangement of the tune to slow waltz time. ("Press Notices")

Harrison's ambitious lecture tour shows her intellectual aspirations, her desire to educate English Canada about the cultural history of French Canada, as well as her determination to put Canada on the map by publicly exhibiting a distinctive aspect of Canadian history and culture. All of these elements are essential to understanding Harrison.

In many ways, Harrison's upbringing, which included conservatory and boarding-school education, allowed her a freedom and opportunity uncommon for Canadian women of the nineteenth century. It does, for example, contrast sharply with May Agnes Fleming's working-class origins in Saint John. About all Fleming and Harrison have in common is a passion for self-expression. Both of them were published writers in their teens. Yet, as a result of her privileged upbringing, some critics have dismissed Harrison as "simply another one of the cultured, genteel, and talented group of Canadian women writers who made good marriages, lived restricted upper-class lives, and wrote poetry and novels in their spare time" (Moyles 141). Such a dismissal presumes that privilege undermines these women's work as writers. At the very least, it presumes that what they had to say was not worthwhile. But in Harrison's case, the association with privilege is simplistic. Notwithstanding her comfortable upbringing, her life was by no means one of leisure. An account by Harrison's granddaughter revealed that the Depression greatly affected the Harrison fortunes. In an effort to trim costs, Harrison's daughter, Frances, and her family moved in with her parents, making a household of eight (Vickers, personal interview 16 April 1998). The incident is a reminder that Harrison, cultured though she was, had to work for her living as a music teacher and performer. Her writing never sustained her on its own. Harrison consistently had trouble "placing her work" (Harrison letter to Stedman, 16 May 1895). She tried her hand at the more commercial genre of long fiction, but the publication of her second novel, *Ringfield* was ill-timed. It was published in 1914, at the beginning of the First World War, a period of retrenchment for literary and other cultural production. Harrison, bothered by ill health and preoccupied by work, would not publish again for eleven years. When she did publish, the publications were small, chapbook collections of poems that did not sell beyond a dedicated readership.[17]

In the 1920s and 1930s Harrison sent letters from various Toronto addresses, the last being a rented house in east Toronto, a much less affluent neighbourhood than the Toronto-Rosedale home where the Harrisons had run the Conservatory of

Music. In a letter to Lorne Pierce,[18] Harrison regrets having to move away from Rosedale because it makes her less accessible to literary acquaintances: "[a]t present we are only renting a small house so there is nothing to that, either. On the other hand our two Rosedale homes and our Ottawa home were all familiar to literary and artistic friends where many interesting gatherings were often held" (Harrison letter to Pierce, 6 October 1926)[19]. Other letters speak of illness and indicate family poverty, as in a letter to Mr. Moore, an editor at Ryerson Press. "I am sorry to say that I am lying quite ill at my home here and can do very little for myself," Harrison writes. "Several times I thought of approaching you with my collected verse but alas—I have no rich patron and cannot put up anything myself and they tell me no publisher will [accept] collected verse otherwise" (Harrison letter to Moore, 14 December 1922). Carole Gerson corroborates Harrison's experiences with Canadian publishing: "The standard arrangement was for the author to cover production costs in exchange for the publisher's reputation, distribution, and publicity. The author might also be expected to arrange for a substantial number of sales. Profits would return to the author after the publisher took his contracted commission on the selling price" ("Business" 82). As financial difficulties increased for Harrison, the possibilities for publishing her poems and fiction in Canada became even more scarce.

In October 1929, Harrison's son, Frederick, was battling cancer, and John and Susie drove to Winnipeg to visit him, as his ailment worsened (Godard, personal interview 10 June 1999). By 1931, Frederick had died, and John suffered what appears to be a minor stroke. In a letter, Harrison describes their deepening gloom at the devastation of the loss:

> I too have had several trying illnesses; [...] Mr. Harrison's attack was most sudden & alarming. I was just about getting ready for the first night of Authors' Week last June when I found him helpless as regards speech; he could not articulate & was himself greatly troubled as he remained quite himself & conscious. He mended next day very quickly & has rallied remarkably. I have no doubt the death of our son had something to do with all this—a two-year anxious time *must* affect one. His name is being perpetuated by the Insurance Institute of Winnipeg, which has founded a "Harrison Memorial Prize"' this year Miss Eliz. Brookes gained it. (Harrison letter to Hume, 17 February 1932)

From 1928-1932, in correspondence with Miss Hume, the secretary at Ryerson Press,[20] Harrison continued to negotiate for the publication of a collection of short stories. Harrison's persistence both in writing and in striving for recognition in the form of publication, shows not only her tenacious character, but also the seriousness with which she pursued her literary career. In the end, the short story collection was never published. Instead, in 1933, Harrison published another collection of verse entitled *Four Ballads and a Play*. Harrison's final publication, *Penelope and Other Poems: A New Book of Verse*, a collection of sixteen poems, appeared in 1934.

In a letter from Harrison dating from December 1934, five months before her death, she declined a nomination to the literary P. E. N. Club[21] with these words: "The years are now totalling up and I have grave family obligations that have to be met, therefore I cannot afford fees. Also, I am not quite in the position of many *others* who have succeeded in literary avocations and to whom such a club would doubtless be of use as well as a source of pleasure. I beg you will excuse" (Harrison to Eares, 2 December 1934). Near the end of her life, then, Harrison seems to concede that she did not succeed in literary pursuits as she had aspired to, and as others had. On May 5, 1935, at the age of 77, Seranus died in Toronto.

II.ii The Nineteenth-Century Canadian Literary Scene

Critic W.H. New characterizes Canada in the years between 1867 and the First World War as "an age of expansion: Victorian, progressive, nationalist, Imperial. The age was also one of definition. […] In Canada, nationalist sentiment was anglocentric, male-dominated, and justified by appeals to God and Natural

Law" (81). New sees these characteristics played out in the literature throughout this long formative period of almost fifty years. In the late nineteenth century, following Confederation in 1867, Canada was experiencing political division and "many varieties of Canadian nationalism" developed into localized groups (Berger 9). At the same time, the completion of the Canadian Pacific Railway's transcontinental line promised industrial growth and increased communication across the vast regions that made up the country and the continent. Roy Daniells explains the prevailing difficulties with Canadian nationalism at the time:

> In the late [eighteen] eighties, [...] the air was filled with debate which produced, not clarification, but further confusion. A strong sentiment for commercial union with the United States provoked violent reaction from convinced imperialists. Assertions of French nationalism, sharpened by resentment at the execution of Riel,[22] were countered by the British nationalism of Ontario, which spread to Manitoba. The prime minister of Nova Scotia openly advocated the secession of his province from the Dominion. American pressures upon Canada led to a reiteration of Macdonald's National Policy, the protection of Canadian independence by tariffs and railways. (Daniells 191)

As contending influences of England and the United States threatened to divide early Canada, a sense that Canada must develop its own national identity gathered new adherants.

Susie Frances Harrison was a child when her father's inn, the Revere Hotel, was a central gathering place for the men who promoted the Canada First Movement. This movement incorporated the ideas of Commonwealth imperialism with Canadian nationalism. While many people felt that these two aspects were "separate and mutually incompatible, for imperialists the sense of nationality and the ideal of imperial unity were interlocked and identical" (Berger 49). The seeming contradiction of wanting to maintain imperial associations with Britain while attaining national independence was what brought its proponents together, and ultimately what tore them apart. "Though these men who gathered in Morgan's quarters in the Revere Hotel differed in character and interests," Carl Berger writes,

> they shared much more than the oppressive atmosphere of the capital–'dull, as ditch-water,' Mair called it. They had all been born in Canada and had all attended college; three were trained in law. Except for [Robert] Haliburton, who was thirty-seven, their average age was twenty-eight. Like the new Dominion itself, they seemed on the threshold of promising careers. They were literary men who had

> either published or were on the verge of delivering some masterpiece to the public. (51).

Although the leaders of Canada First were articulate, political and literary, their ideas were not always progressive. "[T]he normative values of the Canada First Movement," for example, "designed a Canada in which ethnic differences would be absorbed into an anglo-Protestant norm. But in different parts of the country these norms were simply not accepted" (New 85). The debates over defining national identity within the Canada First Movement led to loud disagreements, and, ultimately, its dissolution.

It is easy to imagine the young Susie Frances Harrison feeling the current of national ambitions and cultural autonomy in the debates that swirled around the central meeting place, her father's hotel. Although the Canada First Movement was not destined to be a force in the development of Canadian history, its goals in terms of culture seem to be reflected in her own artistic agenda as she grew to maturity.

During this period of national debate, many of the proponents of Canada First believed that the development of a national literature would enhance patriotism and show an undeniable development of national character (Berger 50). There were many efforts to create and sustain Canadian literary and cultural milieux through periodical publications in the late nineteenth century. In 1873, Goldwin Smith,[23] an

English littérateur who had settled in Toronto, founded *The Canadian Monthly*, which he modelled after British periodicals about politics, literature, and culture; it ran until 1882 (Klinck, "Literary" 161). Immediately after it folded, in 1883, Goldwin Smith and Christopher Blackett Robinson launched *The Week: A Canadian Journal of Politics, Literature, Science and Arts*, a weekly periodical based in Toronto. Susie Frances Harrison's predecessors as editor included Charles G.D. Roberts, and Graeme Mercer Adam, among others, and the paper featured regular articles and poems by such writers as Ethelwyn Wetherald, Agnes Maule Machar,[24] and Sara Jeannette Duncan.[25] *The Week* stopped publishing in 1896, but *The Canadian Magazine*, founded by J.G. Mowat of Toronto, had begun in 1893 and would continue publishing until 1939 (Daniells 196-97). These periodicals filled a sociocultural void in Canada, providing a home-grown counterpart to American and British magazines and journals, even though they could hardly compete with them in terms of prestige and diversity.

Despite the efforts to strengthen the Canadian literary market, many Canadian writers were frustrated by how insubstantial it continued to be, and in 1887 Sara Jeannette Duncan wrote, "The market for Canadian literary work of all sorts is self-evidently in New York" (Duncan qtd. in Gerson, *Purer* 14). By 1899, many Canadian writers were heeding the advice of writer Robert Barr[26] to "get over the border as soon as you can; come to London or go to New York; shake the dust of Canada from your feet" (qtd. in Gerson, *Purer* 30). May Agnes Fleming followed this path and prospered, as we saw in the previous chapter. Both Barr himself and Sara Jeannette Duncan spent many years abroad—Duncan in the U.S., India and England; Barr in Detroit and London—and they succeeded in foreign literary markets. Working in the bigger markets was obviously more rewarding, financially and popularly, than in the developing Canadian market with its unstable journals, widely separated worker concentrations, and relatively small readership. Duncan maintained an affiliation with Canada, through her journalistic writing and her column "Saunterings" which appeared in *The Week* in the 1880s. She is remembered as a writer who "attacked philistinism, urged an international copyright agreement [...] challenged fads, expressed her own enthusiasms, and warned against the overappreciation of literary works on simply national grounds" (New 111). She is today considered a part of the early Canadian canon, as her novel *The Imperialist* (1904) is read in many Canadian Literature courses, and a collection of her short fiction, *The Pool in the Desert* (1903) was re-issued in 1984.

James Doyle finds it "one of the ironies of Canadian cultural history that, at a time when artistic activity was feeling the impetus of a revitalized nationalism, most of the anglophone writers in the country were looking abroad for publishing outlets and critical recognition" (30). Susie Frances Harrison was not among the literary deserters (as she undoubtedly considered them), resolving instead to remain in Canada to observe and describe the local scene, and to encourage and contribute to Canadian literary and cultural growth. Her career can thus be viewed as an alternative to writers like Fleming, Barr and Duncan, who left to pursue literary careers.

Harrison wrote about Canada in musical composition, short stories, novels, and poetry. While she occasionally sought foreign publishers for her fiction, poetry, and music, she never surrendered Canadian content in an effort to get into print. Doyle suggests that "in their efforts to seek the international prominence and substantial remuneration available in American magazine and book publication, Canadian women writers encountered discrimination—a discrimination compounded perhaps by nationality as well as by sex" (33). Harrison travelled to both New York and London, and repeatedly sent her works to publishing houses in both places during her career, and although some of her works, including her two novels, were published in England as well as Canada, the multiple rejections over the years weighed on her.

Carrie MacMillan describes some of the limitations for Harrison as a Canadian writer attempting to break into the international literary scene. "She populated her fiction [...] with themes that she felt were important in Canada," MacMillan writes,

> particularly those of identity, of the artist, and of the dangers of cultural dominance, at first from England and later from the United States. Her work is often characterized by contrived and melodramatic plots, used to heighten a subtext of mythological meaning that gives her work unity and makes it significant within the canon of the literature of the developing nation. (136)

In writing about the "Canadian" issues and telling the story of the developing nation, Harrison's works were not as marketable outside of Canada as they might have been had she camouflaged her settings or made Canada more exotic in her depictions.[27] However, such tactics would have gone against Harrison's national ideals and patriotism in literature.

II.iii Developing the French-Canadian Villanelle

In 1891, Susie Frances Harrison's largest collection of poetry, *Pine, Rose, and Fleur de lis*, was published in Toronto. The collection shows the range of style in Harrison's poetry, as it contains sonnets, blank verse, and an opening sequence of villanelles[28] about French-Canadian life. It is impossible to write about Harrison without making mention of the villanelles. She became renowned for her command of the villanelle, an old poetic form believed to have originated in Italy as a "rustic song, the term itself *villanella* thought to derive from *villano*, an Italian word for 'peasant,' or even *villa* the Latin word for 'country house' or 'farm'" (Strand and Bolan 6). The villanelle was revived in sixteenth-century France "as a French poem with pastoral themes," most notably by Jean Passerat[29] (Strand and Bolan 6; McFarland 167). It is a technically challenging form to write: at nineteen lines long, the five stanza verse-form has a strict, patterned repetition of two rhyming lines throughout that also reappear as the poem's final rhyming couplet.

Harrison published forty-four villanelles in the opening section of *Pine, Rose and Fleur de lis* and dozens of others over the course of her life. The French connection of the poetic form, its pastoral content, and its musicality probably appealed to Harrison, complementing her interest in French-Canadian folklore and music, and challenging her to write with structural and thematic rigour. It also allowed her to align herself with the fathers of pastoral poetry, Theocritus, from the Classical Greek tradition, and William Wordsworth from the Romantic English tradition. In *Pine, Rose, and fleur de lis*, Harrison writes poems entitled "Theocritus" and "Tintern Abbey," to show her reverence for these two poets.[30] Harrison evidently wanted to create a Canadian pastoral tradition, and she invoked Theocritus and Wordsworth to substantiate her ideas within a Canadian context.

In his article "The Revival of the Villanelle" (1982), Ronald E. McFarland describes the history of the form and its characteristics. The villanelle was first imported into English only in the mid-nineteenth century, making Harrison one of its earliest practitioners.[31] McFarland attributes the often-trivial content of the villanelle partly to the rigidity of the repeated rhyming lines throughout, and partly to poets who "limited their subject matter to artificial moments in the pastoral drama" (169). In their explanation of the appeal of the villanelle when it is adroitly executed, Jerome Beatty and William H. Matchett write, "it is vital that the lines reappear as naturally as possible, and yet that the reappearance in differing contexts give new depth, range, or precision to the lines involved" (149).

Considering Harrison's willingness to write in a number of genres, and her feeling for the pastoral as an integral part of the intellectual and cultural life of Canada, it is not at all surprising that she would focus some of her writing energies on reviving an obscure and rigorous poetic form. That she chose the villanelle specifically probably suited her purposes both in its French association and its pastoral tradition, because in the villanelles in *Pine, Rose, and Fleur de lis*, she created French-Canadian characters in rural Catholic Quebec in a light-hearted, albeit sometimes mocking attempt at familiarizing English-Canadians with French-Canadian culture.

Today, many of Harrison's villanelles run the risk of seeming trivial, perhaps even offensive. In literary histories of Canada, Harrison is listed among writers who took up French Canadians as characters. New suggests, "while Catholic French Canada [...] continued to fascinate the Protestant English mind, sentimental views of French Canadian life were the ones that continued to prevail, asserting the cultural centrality in Canada of anglo-Protestant (and Ontario) values" (99). Contemporary scholars may also find it difficult to value Harrison's villanelles because the style of the villanelle has undergone a transformation, changing from being light in tone in the nineteenth century, to its more serious incarnation in the twentieth century (as Dylan Thomas's "Do Not Go Gentle Into That Good Night," the best-known villanelle, demonstrates). McFarland suggests that "once the poet commits himself to trivial subjects and light tones, the poems tend to flow all too easily. The form is undergoing no tension with the subject matter, and when that happens we have, not 'sug'red sonnets,' but 'sacch'rined villanelles'" (174-5). Harrison does not create sentimental villanelles of the kind that might be called saccharined; instead, she creates character sketches and sometimes caricatures in villanelle form, and she uses humour in the repeated lines of the villanelles to cajole and tease her subjects.

Usually, an apparent lightness in form or content belies an underlying social criticism, so that in the repeating lines, as I will show, Harrison can make the reader smile but she also makes a point about the cultural life of French Canadians. She masters a subtle balance in her best villanelles, so that the jocular, rhymed repeated line is both funny and critical, creating an ambivalence that reflects English Canada's regard for French Canada in the late nineteenth century.

In characterizing the viewpoint of "imperial feminist" writers, Cecily Devereux suggests that they "sought first to demonstrate a commitment to the ideas of progress, civilization, and, ultimately, racial dominance, arguing that these goals could only be achieved through the work of the Anglo-Saxon woman as 'mother of the race'" (8). In some of her villanelles, I argue, Harrison takes an imperial feminist view of French-Canadians. Harrison mastered the literary style of the villanelle, and she undoubtedly saw the irony in using a French form to write about French-Canadians. Social criticism is moderated both through the humour in the repeated rhyming lines as I have said, and through the genre of the villanelle itself. In Harrison's hands, the criticism lacks sting, but it is critical all the same.

Given Harrison's nationalist tendencies, the title of the collection, *Pine, Rose and Fleur de lis,* evoking native, English, and French influences on Canada, is characteristic. The villanelle sequence, "Down the River," describes a journey along the St. Lawrence toward the Saguenay, and comprises the "*fleur de lis*" section of the collection.[32] In several of her villanelles, Harrison portrays stereotypical images of nineteenth-century Quebec *habitants*, including the child-bride, the priest, the mother of twenty-five, and the spinster. The figures Harrison focuses on in her poetry fit into a paradoxical "imperial domesticity" (Kaplan 188). Amy Kaplan's work on domesticity shows that portraying the nation through domestic ideology is often an attempt to forge social unity among its different racial, religious, gendered, and classed factions. Harrison's villanelles can be read as an attempt to create such "bonds of internal unity while impelling the nation outward to encompass the globe" (Kaplan 189). On the one hand, the female figures Harrison focuses on are central characterizations, representative of part of Canada; on the other hand, there is an interpretive duality, as she shows both judgment and tolerance in the cultural readings of the poems. Harrison hopes to promote tolerance with detailed portraits of French-Canadian characters in her poems, but she also pokes fun at what she sees as the excesses of their ways. For example, in "St. Jean B'ptiste," Harrison conveys sympathy for the child who must dress in a heavy costume in the heat of day for the parade: "Poor little Antoine! *He* does not mind! / The nuns are *so sweet* and the priests *so kind*" (*PRF* 57). Her use of italics conveys the contradiction of what she has written, and again, her stance is critical. In "At St. Barthelemi," she conveys the tedium of the endless succession of French-Canadian Catholic celebrations from its opening lines:

> In the parish of St. Barthelemi
>   There is always something taking place,
> A procession, a fête, or a jubilee,
> Some kind of religious revelry.
>   (Harrison *PRF* 55 ll. 1-4)

While French Canada and its history clearly intrigues Harrison, given her research and musical recitals on the subject as well as her preoccupation with rituals and customs in the villanelles, a greater national agenda of unity gives her a perspective that is far from a broad-minded, diverse portrayal of French-Canadians. Instead, Harrison's villanelles about French Canada are ambivalent: she is deeply interested in, and even sympathetic to French-Canadians, but her fixation on their exotic differences to English Canada lends a judgemental air to the poems.

Harrison creates a rich image of nation by focusing on the female figures of a child-bride, a mother, and a spinster in the villanelles. She suggests that in Quebec child-brides are the norm, married women with upwards of twenty children are common, and even the spinster, it is implied, is sexually charged and therefore, to some degree, suspect. By hinting at the sexuality of Quebec women, Harrison suggests French-Canadians follow a moral code different from Anglo-Canadians, and she takes an almost anthropological interest in its exotic side and a poet's delight in its unique aspects. However, the implications of this interest also seem to be to show the cultural ascendancy of Anglo-Canadians. In drawing an awareness of another culture's values, Harrison moves toward tolerance, and yet the superior judgment of an Anglo-Protestant cultural ideal is never entirely out of the works.

II.iii.a A Child-Bride at Cap Santé

Developing stereotypical images of marriage and motherhood in "At Cap Santé" and "At Ste. Hilaire," Harrison uses humour and irony to highlight two aspects of Québecoise Roman Catholic womanhood. In both poems, Harrison's humour becomes evident in the repeating lines.

AT CAP SANTÉ

I ask'd to-day, 'how old is the bride?'
 And they told me, quick, and true, and straight.
Jeannette has no need her age to hide,

But says 'fourteen' with an air of pride.
 Now if in tow at the gray church gate
I should ask to-day how old is the bride,

Would Lilian's friends the truth confide,
 Or me would they fain execrate?
Jeannette has no need her age to hide.

Her eyes met mine as her hat I tied,
 Frank eyes, that smil'd with an air sedate
When I ask'd to-day–how old is the bride?

Fourteen! Just think! Ye belles aside!
 Bid envy swift capitulate!

Jeannette has no need her age to hide.

Heigho! those calm dark eyes! I sigh'd,
When musing much on the holy estate,
I ask'd to-day–how old is the bride?
Jeannette has no need *her* age to hide.

Through the repeated lines "I ask'd to-day–how old is the bride? / Jeannette has no need her age to hide" (1, 3), Harrison ensures that the bride's youth remains at the forefront of the reader's mind. The narrator of the poem forthrightly asks "how old is the bride," a question that might seem impertinent or even impolite in other cultures, and the subject of the poem, Jeannette, answers equally forthrightly, obviously proud to marry at that age. Harrison emphasizes Jeannette's childishness by having the narrator tend to Jeannette the way an adult tends to a child: "Her eyes met mine as her hat I tied" (10). Within the jovial repeating lines in this poem, the juxtaposition of Lilian's town marriage carries many implications. The narrator does not ask Lilian's age, and would not risk doing so, suggesting that she is older and therefore of marriageable age in other, more conventional societies. Lilian is English, judging by her name (which would be Liliane in French), and from the city—all of which contrasts with young, French, and rural Jeannette. Harrison uses the contrasting images of Lilian and Jeannette in the poem to highlight the cultural gap between English Canada and French Canada.

While Harrison's views are softened beneath a layer of irony and humour, she adroitly exploits the villanelle's repeating lines to convey shifting attitudes over the course of the poem. At first, the narrator seems to be caught up in the excitement of Jeannette's wedding, but her repeated references to her youth, though not outwardly critical, suggest bemusement, and a kind of nagging concern. The narrator appears to give credence to, or even to envy Jeannette's marriage, but a reader sharing the opposing opinion can perceive judgement beneath the irony in these lines. The contradiction serves Harrison's purpose as a writer appealing to the largest number of readers in a small country: through her double-speak she both ostensibly rejoices in Jeannette's young marriage, while at the same time she casts a critical eye on the marriage of such a young girl. In terms of Harrison's nationalism, she similarly appeals to a wider range of Canadians by making both interpretations possible, and she maintains an ambivalent line of creating awareness and tolerance of cultural difference while still judging it.

II.iii.b Prolific Motherhood at Ste. Hilaire

The villanelle "At Ste. Hilaire," on the subject of large families in Quebec, is much more value laden and critical.

AT STE HILAIRE

Combien des enfans? Why, twenty-five!
Now, by all the Gods and every Saint,
I wonder the woman is left alive

To tell the tale! How many survive?
She answers me, calm and without constraint,
Combien? Mossieu? Why, twenty-five.

Not *one* ever lost? Not one; they thrive,
Do little ones in this parish quaint.
I wonder the woman is left alive,

Who has less than twelve. The bigger the hive,
The greater the honour, no sign of complaint–
Combien des enfans? Why, twenty-five.

The men don't care and the priests contrive
At mass the duty of parents to paint,
But I wonder the women are left alive.

Here come Antoine, Josephe, Max, who drive
The rest–fifteen. At the sight you faint.
Combien des enfans? Why, twenty-five!
I wonder the woman is left alive.

In "At Ste. Hilaire," Harrison focuses on the role of the mother in a French-Canadian Catholic family, and she appears at first sympathetic toward her. In the repeating lines, "*Combien des enfans?* Why twenty-five! / [...] I wonder the woman is left alive" (1, 3), Harrison uses humour to express a kind of awe at family size in Quebec, and to emphasize the stereotype that Catholic families were prolific reproducers that she, like many Anglo-Saxon Canadians, held about French-Canadian Roman Catholics.

Large families were politically expedient in Quebec social policy, popularly known as *la revanche des berceaux*, the revenge of the cradle, by which Quebec nationalists determined to sustain the French-Canadian critical mass in the demography by birth-rate as a means of counteracting the massive immigration that was rapidly expanding population in English-speaking Canada (Joy 51).[33] *La revanche des berceaux* was a source of pride in Quebec in Harrison's day, and a curiosity, at best, for Canadians outside of Quebec who were aware of it. W.H. New, in his examination of trends in the literary history of Canada, explains that English-Canadian writers considered "the Roman Catholic *ancien régime* of Quebec a stagnant civilisation" (92). The prevailing stereotype portrayed "the aristocratic Catholic establishment [as] corrupt, [while] the agrarian habitant became a symbol of natural goodness" (New 92). New acknowledges that "Quebec tales of martyrdom and the *maudits anglais* countered Ontario tales of quaint habitant, sophisticated Protestant and corrupt Catholic" (86). Harrison's depictions of Quebec society in the villanelles dramatize the mistrust New describes, and one of her novels, which I discuss later in the chapter, portrays the *habitant* as clinging desperately to old-fashioned traditions and ideas about Canadian nationalism.

In "At Ste. Hilaire," after two light-hearted stanzas, in which Harrison's male narrator, "*Mossieu,*" (monsieur, or sir, in Quebec accent) questions the Québecoise mother of twenty-five, the narrator becomes more sinister in the third stanza, when he asks, "Not *one* ever lost?" to which the mother boasts, "Not one; they thrive." What follows is a shift in the meaning of the repeating line: "I wonder the woman is left alive, / Who has less than twelve. The bigger the hive, / The greater the honour, no sign of complaint" (9-11). No longer is the narrator amazed that the woman who has borne twenty-five children is still alive; rather, the opposing perspective prevails, that any Quebecoise with fewer than twelve children would be a disgrace to her culture, her religion, and herself. The narrator begins by marveling at the number of children and then considers the pressure to procreate in the Quebec Catholic community, and shifts point of view mid-way through the poem. Again, the repeating lines subtly change the meaning they convey, as the narrator changes point of view, making two opposing readings of the lines possible. At first, the speaker's persistent questioning and the mother's proud replies suggest to the reader that the narrator is curious about the mother and the social conditions of families in Quebec, but her curiosity turns sardonic when she considers the "honour" and blessing of having more than twelve children.

Harrison makes a blatant criticism in the next stanza: "The men don't care and the priests contrive / At mass the duty of parents to paint, / But I wonder the women are left alive" (12-15). With these lines, Harrison gives poetic expression to common criticism about the role of men and priests within the Quebec family dynamic. She implies a lack of caring, if not outright selfishness, on the part of husbands and influential, celibate priests towards women and their familial and community responsibilities as child-bearers. She focuses on the mother, who gives birth annually or nearly so, raises her children, and is too overburdened to realize any other ambitions or fulfil any other talents. Again, judgement and social criticism are conveyed with humour in this villanelle. Through the use of the repeating lines, as stipulated by the rigid poetic form, Harrison's poem progresses emotionally from expressing the narrator's polite curiosity about the mother, to conveying sympathy for her, to the discernment of the larger sociological problem, which she locates in the gendered power dynamic of priests and men towards women in Catholic French Canadian communities.

Harrison undoubtedly knew educated, sophisticated women in Montreal in her time there as student and performer. To her credit, she observed life in the province beyond the privileged circles in which she ordinarily moved. Whether the character sketches in her villanelles were based on real encounters or imagined, Harrison responded creatively. She turned them into poems. The fact that she chose to realize her poems in the quaint villanelle form may somehow blunt the feeling, turning it into a formal exercise and dulling the emotional experience behind it. Readers coming to these villanelles at the remove of more than a century should not be surprised to realize that their pleasures, and their worth, require some time and a little pain to reveal themselves. They have their charms, though they never quite unleash their fastidiousness and their quaintness.

II.iii.c Covert Sexuality in the Villanelle

Two more character poems, "Catharine Plouffe" and "Benedict Brosse," are the final villanelles in the "Down the River" sequence. Catharine Plouffe is "the gray hair'd spinster," described as "a contrast to convent chits, / At her spinning wheel, in the room on the roof!" (1, 3). The speaker implies that Benedict Brosse visits Catharine nightly. Benedict, in his own villanelle, is depicted as a man of sixty without a wife. Neither Catharine nor Benedict is looking to marry, and both are depicted as independent: "Will they ever marry? Just ask her. Pouf! / She would like you to know she's not lost her wits" (*PRF* 62). The insinuation is that Catharine and Benedict interact privately and perhaps sexually. Catharine is either an old spinster who takes pleasures furtively, or a progressive woman who sees the benefits of living independently and who refuses to be limited by the narrow, Catholic ideal common to French-Canadian women.

In her villanelles on female figures, Harrison may be revealing more of her private thoughts than she realized. It is possible to read these villanelles as having a feminist inclination, since Harrison writes about characters not often represented in poetry, and she makes their domestic choices of central concern. Carrie MacMillan notes that Harrison uses the "exotic and distinctive 'other' world of Quebec to delineate the dark world of sexuality, a topic not easily or politely discussed in Canadian fiction in her day, particularly by women authors" (MacMillan, *Silenced* 132). In this respect, Harrison can be seen as a careful writer, using the exotic settings to raise questions about nationalism and women's place. Yet the stereotyping in her character sketches may have limited her contributions to both.

Harrison's villanelles on French-Canadian culture demonstrate the ambivalence of at once embracing its distinctiveness as a way of distinguishing Canada from other nations, while also marking the considerable gap between French- and English-Canadian cultures. There is an inherent contradiction in her nationalist discourse in simultaneously embracing and ridiculing French Canada as a unique component of Canada's multiculturalism, while at the same time emphasizing French Canada's differences as somehow retrograde if not downright backward. By criticizing or at least questioning French-Canadian values, Harrison tacitly upholds the imagined cultural superiority of English Canada, as outlined by W.H. New, in contrast. The greater aim of the villanelles is to make people consider their actions and beliefs critically, instead of blindly following religious dogma or patriarchal notions. However, Harrison's use of stereotypes makes her work, if entertaining, still unenlightening with regard to cultural difference. Homi Bhabha describes the ambivalence of stereotypes, "that 'otherness' which is at once an object of desire and derision, an articulation of difference contained within the fantasy of origin and identity" (67). Harrison seems to be both fascinated by her French-Canadian characters and bemused by them. Stereotypes interfere with her nationalist discourse both in terms of inclusive cultural representation and prejudice. On the one hand, Harrison recognizes French Canada as a unique component in Canada's overall identity. On the other hand, her works reinforce a specific national agenda, in which the differences all seem to favour the 'normalcy' of the Anglo-Celtic way in the cultural mélange of Confederation.

In his work on racism and nationalism, Etienne Balibar shows the integral relationship between prejudice and national identity: "In actual fact, nationalism is a force for uniformity and rationalization and it also nurtures the fetishes of a national identity which derives from the origins of the nation and has, allegedly, to be preserved from any form of dispersal" (54). Nationalism, by this definition then, risks consolidating a complex of prejudices in the guise of a shared nationalist creed. In order to develop a national identity, writers create a narrative about nationalism that can only succeed, Balibar suggests, if it is "based on the integrity of the nation" (59). For Harrison, the national integrity apparently entails a uniform ideal of Canadian nationalism, a social unity based on anglo, middle-class, urban, Protestant norms. Harrison's villanelles show her nationalist ideas, and her concerns for women within limited cultural frameworks. For a writer seeking readership and marketability in a small, developing country, Harrison sought her niche by paying attention, as an English-Canadian writer, to French Canada and its cultural difference, and in dramatizing these differences in sometimes humorous, sometimes critical villanelles. Harrison's characterization of sexualized French-Canadian women may have continued the "fetish of national identity," to use Balibar's term, both by drawing attention to the prolific sexual nature of French Canadians, a fact that would affect population growth, and by implying an imagined superior cultural ideal. In this way, she could stand out among her fellow poets both in terms of genre and subject matter, a creative stance that might enhance her literary reputation.

While Harrison contributed to the development of Canadian literature and culture, she was never regarded as a trendsetter, much as she would have liked to have been. It is clear that Harrison considered herself a Canadian pioneer, by staying in Canada to cultivate the Canadian national narrative. The biographical sketch she sent to Stedman described her poetry as unique because "it illustrates passions, emotions, and experiences undealt with by other Canadian writers" (Harrison letter to Stedman, 16 May 1895). Nine years after the publication *Crowded Out! and Other Sketches*, Harrison defends local colour in writing, and she explains how she perceives her contribution to its use in Canada:

> I may say here that I really was the first writer in Canada to attract general attention to local colour, so to speak, of the French. Fully eight years before Lighthall, Maclennan, D. C. Scott or any others attempted the subject, I had brought out—in Ottawa, alas, and therefore wasted—a little book of short stories dealing largely with the *habitant* in it. In fact, I have always looked upon this as my own special subject, yet—you know how sometimes the pioneer is forced to fall behind. (Harrison letter to Stedman, 16 May 1895)

Harrison's quip that "the pioneer is forced to fall behind," expresses her frustration with going unrecognized for her achievements in literary style. Her self-appraisal is questionable, as writer Thomas Chandler Haliburton[34], for example, who preceded Harrison by more than a generation, drew characters in *The Clockmaker* (1835) who spoke in the local vernacular, although what Harrison says might be true in comparison to those writers she lists. What appears to have blunted her artistic reputation was not a lack of craft or a failure of imagination. She is technically precise, and her characters are, at best, winsome and interesting. Perhaps it was her judgement both to stay in Canada and to write in the intellectually-rigorous genre of the villanelle that disappointed her in the long run. Her choice of the villanelle attracted no following among fellow-poets and only cursory curiosity among reviewers. It was meticulously formal at the very moment that Victorian formalism was giving way to looser modernism and the first experiments with free verse. A century later, Harrison's villanelles stand out as interesting poetic accomplishments, but also as dated, stereotypical character sketches.

II.iv Conflicts and Tension in Two Nationalist Novels

So far, I have considered Harrison's early poetry as examinations of domestic and nationalist tensions within Canada. Two of Harrison's novels, *The Forest of Bourg-Marie*, which was published in 1898, and *Search for a Canadian*, an unpublished novel written circa 1887, also examine Canada's national identity. *The Forest of Bourg-Marie* is again concerned with French-Canada's parochial customs and also with Canada's position as a colonized country neighbouring a robustly independent republic. *Search for a Canadian* poses the question of who truly embodies Canadianism in a country replete with political, ethnic, linguistic, and cultural diversity.

Harrison's first novel, *The Forest of Bourg-Marie*, published in 1898 in both Canada and England, was, by her account, written ten years earlier. She spent those ten years trying to peddle it to publishers in England, the United States, and Canada. A letter to W.D. Lighthall, describes the gruelling process of seeking a publisher:

> About my own book, last May I sent off poor "Bourg-Marie" for the eighteenth time to Arnold, altogether on speculation and without thinking of you and that anything [would] come of it. I had had the m.s. typewritten and [I was so] tired of American houses thought I [would] begin in England. I chose Arnold because he began with *A*! Fact. I heard nothing till end of July, when the agreement came to hand with a request to cable at his expense, if terms were satisfactory. You can imagine my sense of relief; *now* I feel that I can go ahead with this, my first sustained work actually in print. It *was* written, alas–just ten years ago, when I was 29—judge therefore, that if anyone claims it as *inspired* by later writers, you know what to say. (Harrison letter to Lighthall, 1898)

To her credit, Harrison appears to have come through the ordeal with her self-confidence intact. Here again, she expresses her belief in being a literary pioneer, and her anxiety about never being credited with that distinction. This letter also makes it clear that the 1880s were a prolific period for Harrison, as both of the novels discussed here were written around 1886-1889.[35]

II.iv.a Rural Innocence and Urban Cynicism in Old Quebec

The Forest of Bourg-Marie is a historical romance set in old Quebec. Harrison examines the themes of nationalism and the lure of the U.S. with all it symbolizes—freedom, opportunity, and wealth—as her subject matter. Mikel Caron, an elderly hunter and fur-trapper, is the novel's central character. Had politics and history not intervened, Caron would have been a *seigneur*, as he came from a wealthy family that owned a manor house in the seventeenth century. Of all the people in the close-knit, small community of Bourg-Marie, Mikel knows the surrounding forests best, having been a trapper for so long. He is portrayed as desperately attached to preserving the traditions of *le Bas Canada*.[36] In fact, he considers his old, ruined manor house so precious a family relic that he refuses to live there. Instead, he stores his valuable furs there, and he keeps the dining table set with the best silverware and crystal. Caron's obsession with the manor house and his dream to restore it symbolize his allegiance to the 'pure' traditions of *le Bas Canada* against the encroaching, anglocentric progress and influence.

Magloire Caron, Mikel's grandson and only living relative, ran away to the United States seeking fame and fortune. In the nine years since Magloire has been gone, Mikel and Magloire have had no contact. Magloire's audacious return to Bourg-Marie is central to the novel's plot. He is the prodigal grandson. He returns a fast-talking swindler in city clothes with the new, anglicized name, Murray Carson. Magloire decides to surprise Mikel, believing he will be delighted to see him. But he has ulterior motives. Magloire has run into financial difficulty in Milwaukee, where he had been living beyond his means, and lavishing gifts on a married woman. He hopes Mikel will provide him with enough furs to pay off his American debts. Magloire arrives in Bourg-Marie telling boastful tales of Milwaukee, of the freedom and opportunity in the United States, and denouncing the stronghold of the Roman Catholic society in Bourg-Marie.

From the first description of Magloire, Harrison caricatures him:

> [Magloire Caron's] hair, of that harsh jet-black stiff kind so frequently found among his countrymen, was parted in the middle, and, after being drawn away to either side in two well-marked horns, was plastered down everywhere else with the newest thing in pomatum, a

> preparation of castor-oil, bay-rum, and attar of roses. His costume was an English tweed of not unprepossessing pattern, considered alongside the preposterous gray and claret check that Louis and Jack had both chosen as best calculated to display their knowledge of correct fashion, and to please their devoted mother. His cravat (Magloire's) was of pale pink linen, worn over a striped navy-blue and white cotton shirt. His jewellery was very much *en evidence*, and a silk handkerchief, in which purple figured on a saffron ground, completed the iridescent nature of his apparel. And although this quasi-picturesque garb did not offend so keenly in his case as it would have done in that of a more purely prosaic type, still, [...] it seemed a pity that his magnificent proportions, his glistening teeth, his night-black hair, and his sombre but healthful complexion, were lost, if not indeed made ridiculous, by his affectation of a foreign style. (*FBM* 18-19)

The narrator's disdainful gaze continues throughout the novel, as she describes Magloire "in his irreproachable tweeds" (30), or "whistling, not a *habitant* song, minor and true and tender, but the vulgar refrain of a chorus he had heard in a Milwaukee oyster bar, where a female orchestra enlivened the tedium of the proceedings" (30). Magloire's name means "my glory," and he is an example of "the indescribably jaunty, slightly trivial, and impertinent air that country-bred people very frequently acquire after a limited experience of life in the cities" (*FBM* 33).

Harrison's depiction of Magloire demonstrates her impatience with the belief that republican America offered so much more than monarchical Canada as a way of life. She chooses a culturally-specific character to show the lure of urban, materialistic, anglo centres in the United States to young French-Canadian men. Harrison's depiction of Magloire seems contradictory to her nationalist intentions in the villanelles. Here is, after all, a young French-Canadian who has moved to the American city as a means of escaping the circumscribed society he was born into. But of course, it goes much deeper than that for Harrison. Nationalism requires a fine balance. In a spectacular scene in the chapter entitled "Sedition," Magloire gathers as many of his fellow Bourg-Marie natives as he can, and implores them to rise up, out of their subjugated status, and leave behind their small-town attitudes, religion, and culture. He promises them a brand-new world:

> There will be no organized Church, no organized Government. The family will rule the State. [...] Your lives will be made gay, pleasant, charming. No more the forge, the raft, the field, the forest, but the theatre, the concert, the drive, the music. [...] Language, creed, existing institutions, prejudice, pride, sentiment—all must be rooted

> out. I do not ask you to be American. I do not ask you to be English. I ask you to *speak* English, but to *be*—Citizens of the World, Free-born, Free-living, Independent Creators of yourselves!" (*FBM* 122-23)

Magloire's voice is renouncing rather than rebellious, and he denounces traditional *habitant* ways as old-fashioned and repressive. Yet the reader knows that Magloire is a deceitful fraud, and through that irony Harrison makes the reader aware, however subtly, that running off to the independent republic next door breeds corruption or false hopes rather than progress. The message is clear: it would be far better to respect one's heritage and to nurture progress within one's own country than to pursue short-term, fraudulent ambitions in America.

Whether Harrison is speaking indirectly about the Canadian literary exodus to the United States is speculative, but she is at least generally dramatizing her critique of talented Canadians who left Canada to further their careers at the expense of Canada's national identity. Her ideas are discerning in reflecting the concern over the fragmented, inferior national identity left behind, and of the phenomenon of young professionals leaving Canada to earn a better living elsewhere—what we today label "brain drain."

Nicolas Laurière is set up as a foil to Magloire in appearance as well as in personality. He is a soft-spoken, young trapper from the village, about the same age as Magloire, who occasionally visits the curmudgeonly and solitary Mikel to discuss their shared trade. Laurière is portrayed as simple and unsophisticated. At first, he is taken in by Magloire's fast talk, and he listens earnestly to the promises of wealth and a freer lifestyle in the United States (*FBM* 16). Magloire sets himself up as an example to his old community. He extols the escape from Bourg-Marie for the younger generation, and Laurière finds his curiosity piqued for the first time in his life by the opportunities outside of Bourg-Marie:

> Unaccustomed to any introspection or analysis of the emotions, he did not know that what filled him with hesitation was the fact that he was being tempted to forfeit his nationality and forego his country. Too ignorant to estimate accurately the correct and actual status of Magloire as an American citizen or as an English-born subject of Franco-Canadian descent, he yet experienced something which, subtly, but stupidly, seemed to confuse and cloud his power of will, to bias his preferences. He had longed passionately to go until Magloire had asked him, and then something struck at his heart and his mental vision so that he could not place, nor could he answer even at random its solemn questionings. (*FBM* 26-7)

The narrator's gaze fixes on Laurière's "ignorance" and "inexperience" in this passage. Yet, Laurière's intuition causes him to have a moment of clarity about Magloire once he sets his sights on Laurière as a possible American recruit. Harrison draws the national boundaries of her argument in this passage, as, although Laurière cannot articulate his own adverse reaction to Magloire's suggestion, "he [is still] filled with hesitation." Harrison sets up opposing, prototypical characters in Nicolas Laurière and Magloire Caron to dramatize the unique tensions for French Canadians in Canadian culture. There are traditionalists, like Mikel Caron, close to the soil and satisfied with his lot, and there are modernists, like Magloire, a refugee from the *habitant* ways of his grandfather, lured by so-called progress and the latest fads. Between the two poles, there is Laurière, weighing the options. As a young person, he seeks opportunity, but he is also loyal to his background and upbringing. Harrison examines the conflict between old and new traditions through the opposing characters of Nicolas and Magloire. Neither one is perfect, as Magloire's insincere recruitment is bound to set people up for failure, and Nicolas' loyalty will prove his downfall.

When Magloire visits his grandfather, he does not expect Mikel to recognize him because of his new clothes and his city style. In fact, Mikel recognizes his grandson from "the very first word he let drop" (*FBM* 34). The dramatic irony of this scene is satisfying; Magloire hands Mikel his business card with the name "Mr. Murray Carson, Expert in Horseflesh" on it, and unleashes a tirade of arrogant opinions about Canada, while Mikel pretends to take the bait. Magloire's renunciation of his French name and origins symbolizes the breakdown of respect between himself and his grandfather, and the clash between old and new French-Canadian traditions. Magloire thinks he is deceiving the old man, but in fact his deceit is readily apparent to his grandfather. Magloire is too self-absorbed to notice. Mikel challenges "Murray Carson" in a speech rich in irony:

> "[T]o be candid, Messire Carson, if my grandson Magloire be such a one as you, if he dress like you, if he talk like you—a bad French, which is not made better by a frequent bad English, as I understand it is likely to be—I care not if I never see him again, and he is better to remain in his Milwaukee and his States than to return here to Bourg-Marie. It will be, doubtless, that he too would find the winters horrible, the summers stifling, the forests gloomy, the houses poor and uncomfortable, and the people—common. [...] But as for freedom, we are quite free. Make no mistake, the *Canadien* is no serf, no slave, no prisoner. We live, it is true, under English rule. Well, it is comfortable. I—I myself do not like these English, but I

> have nothing to do with them. I leave them alone. I know three words of their language—*Government, bear,* and *damn*. They do not molest me and I ignore them. How are you free, and how is my grandson Magloire free, that *I* am not free–you cannot show me, for there is nothing to show. Well, you can tell Magloire. Perhaps he will laugh." (*FBM* 38-9).

Magloire feels embarrassed, and begins to wish that his grandfather had recognized him, and so his ploy backfires. Harrison thus puts into old Mikel's mouth a spirited defense of French-Canadian integrity. She admits the conflict between English and French Canada, and puts forward a kind of resolution, perhaps too easily, when she has Mikel say "it is comfortable." She has him defend an idea of "freedom" which is different from, and perhaps more real than, the freedom that Magloire boasts is more available and more possible in the United States than in Canada. Freedom relates to self-reliance and self-fulfillment, and Harrison suggests that Canadians need to seize the idea that they are free, and that Mikel has not only attained freedom in those terms, but is well aware that he has done so. Mikel's disappointment in and his resentment of what Magloire has come to represent are so acute that Magloire realizes it will not be nearly as easy for him to swindle furs from his grandfather as he originally thought.

The novel ends with a dramatic scene of Magloire desperately trying to steal furs from the old manor house, and in his bungling attempt burning down the house. Laurière dies trying to save Mikel's furs, in what is symbolically an affirmation of the traditions of *le bas Canada*. Laurière's death signifies the perils that threaten the next generation of French-Canadian traditionalists. It can also be read as the triumph of what is represented as the corrupt, materialistic republic of the United States, where people apparently buoy up their freedom with theft, arson, and betrayal.

In terms of national identity, the purgation of old French-Canadian traditions and customs in the fire at the end of *The Forest of Bourg-Marie* seems to warn French Canada against adhering too closely with their own insularity and exclusivity in Canada, and at the same time against being too easily lured by the American alternative. The warning seems especially violent, given the unhappy ending for Mikel Caron, who will die as the last of his line of traditionalists. The ending of Harrison's novel also challenges the genre of the historical romance because it is difficult, unresolved, unhappy, and it does not offer the possibility of hope for the future.

Robert Barr wrote a letter to Harrison about the novel, which she kept in her personal correspondence, questioning the novel's conclusion:

> I imagine the ending of your book must be artistic because I loath[e] it. Cruelly to break the back of that splendid young man [Nicolas]; to allow him to die by slow torture; to ruin the old Seigneur and leave him lonely for the rest of his life; to let the cad prosper in Topeka on his looting; well! you may stretch me on the toughest rack in the lowest dungeon of the Central Prison in Toronto, but you will never get me to admit that I like the conclusion of your romance of the forest. (Barr letter to Harrison 26 May 1899)

Barr closes his letter by assuring Harrison, "Nevertheless I'll buy any book you write after this, hoping you will not lacerate my feelings, yet reading with fear and trembling until I am safely through it." Barr's letter shows the extent to which Harrison's ending, with its unapologetic, unhappy resolution, was unconventional in terms of genre. If readers were looking for happy endings, *Bourg-Marie* was not the book to read. Harrison's critique of Canadian national identity, and specifically the difficulty of French-Canadians, may well have kept her novel from having the popular success she craved, both in terms of genre and subject matter.

Fred Cogswell takes an interesting position in his reading of *The Forest of Bourg-Marie* when he describes it as "an ancestor of *Maria Chapdelaine* and *Trente Arpents*,"[37] two better-known Canadian novels. He sees *Bourg-Marie* as "a curious work, a hybrid of romance and realism" and he explains his position: "It was not Susan Frances Harrison's intention to write a realistic novel, and her excursion into realism is partly for satirical purposes and partly because an unconscious intuition of truth overpowered her conscious convictions and led her, in her work, to make what she considered evil triumph over what she considered good" (Cogswell 199). Cogswell argues that Harrison seemed to champion the traditions she portrayed in Mikel Caron, but she was led by "an unconscious intuition of truth"—strangely similar to Nicolas Laurière—to ultimately resist letting them survive and triumph over the debased progress portrayed in Magloire. In the end, Harrison cannot fathom a happy ending for her romance novel because of its symbolism in terms of nationalist discourse. It would be too unrealistic, in Harrison's view, to have the French Canadians remain in Canada as an isolated anomaly, unintegrated and insular, a perpetual island in the accelerating stream of anglo, imperial, middle-class, Protestant culture.

Instead, she portrays what she fears will happen should French-Canadians maintain their traditional, cultural stance without compromise: she effectively kills it with Nicolas Laurière, the next generation of decent, traditional French Canada. The heritage of the tradition that Laurière expected to inherit is wiped out with him in the old manor house and its treasury of furs that were Mikel's prized possessions.

Compounding the death and destruction, Magloire steals from his grandfather and escapes to the States. The ending of *Bourg-Marie* is unsettling in its implications. Laurière, potentially the hero of the novel, dies, leaving old Mikel to try to rebuild and restore his traditions as he may.

II.iv.b Searching for a Real Canadian in the Capital

Harrison's contradictory yearning for tradition and for the revisions to history necessitated by the developing new nation would provide a tension in her writing practically from beginning to end. Her unpublished novel, *Search for a Canadian*, is set in Ottawa, the political capital, in the 1880s, less than two decades after its political ascendancy, when it was largely unknown to most Canadians. The novel follows wealthy and politically astute American visitors, Josiah Jansen and his daughter Julia, as they integrate into the community while Josiah searches for "a Canadian–a typical Canadian, pure and simple—one who has not been born abroad—one who is proud of being a Canadian—one who understands his country and loves her—one who is familiar with her past, is helpful in her present and is watchful for her future. In one word—a patriot" (*SFC* 94).

In the process, they meet Sir Rufus Trant, Cabinet minister of Marine and Fisheries, and his society wife, Lady Henrietta Trant. The Trants provide a drawing-room social life of dinner parties and sleigh-rides. The Jansens also come into the company of Carleton Chester, an expatriate American who works for Trant while carrying on illicitly with Henrietta. This dynamic becomes more complicated when Chester begins a serious flirtation with Julia Jansen, who is betrothed to her cousin Rochester Phelps. As well, Sir Rufus Trant engages in a love affair with Adèle Bellechasse, a young, innocent French Canadian woman who becomes pregnant by him. Her family, consisting of her Papa and her criminal brother Alexis, get involved, blackmailing Sir Rufus with the scandal for money.

Against this background of intrigue, the main plot line focuses on the determination of an American visitor to promote Canadian identity. In his quest for the "true Canadian," Jansen hopes to cultivate a sense of nationalism, and a patriotism from within. He meets Hugo Francis Percivale, a poet and patriot unabashed yet subtle in his devotion to and his promotion of Canada, and it is Percivale who restores Jansen's faith in the possibilities for Canada beyond colonialism or annexation.

Josiah Jansen, the novel's central character, is a former American Congressman and Senator who renounced the corrupt U.S. political scene when he found that his colleagues were routinely selling their votes. He went on to write pamphlets, and became "a thinker." When he arrives in Ottawa, he is depicted as being surprised by the sophistication of the society he finds there. At a dinner party at the Trants, Josiah Jansen remarks, "I might as well be in New York, only, if I were there, I should feel that I might as well be in London.[…] I was not prepared for quite so much elegance, charm and breeding" (*SFC* 80). Jansen develops a taste for Canada, and for Canadian life, only to be puzzled by the insecurity inherent in being so close to a republic, while maintaining such fierce loyalty to the Empire.

The other American character, Chester, represents the dissatisfied, supercilious American living in Canada. His ironic refrain that natural phenomena like the Northern Lights, or architecturally-stunning buildings such as the National Library are "not bad for Canada" emphasize his disdain for the country (*SFC* 107). Jansen tells him, "I like to meet with people who can always find a good word for the town they live in, and its citizens. But you—you are the very opposite" (*SFC* 92). While Harrison regards her American characters with a critical eye, especially the American presumption that they are somehow superior and more free than Canadians, she obviously delights in writing about them. This again shows the ambivalence of representation: on the one hand, she loathes Americans' attitudes toward Canada; on the other, she finds them fascinating enough to make central characters out of them.

Jansen himself, a comparatively benign American in Harrison's perspective, while questioning Canadians about their loyalty and nationalism, is called into question at times as well. When he remarks upon all of the pomp and circumstance at the Government Opening, Reginald Curzon, a government worker says, "You see a great deal to disapprove of, I expect, simply because you are an American" (*SFC* 141). Later, in a conversation with Lady Trant about his meetings with other people, Jansen says, "So I followed [Mr. Januarius] and addressed him, as a free-born American ought not to be afraid of doing." To which Lady Trant responds, "Don't be ridiculous, [...] You know very well you are no freer than I am. But it pleases you to say so, I suppose" (*SFC* 159). Jansen's journey through Ottawa, and through the political playground displayed there, deepens his understanding of Canadian politics, and leads him to his position on Canada as a nation that deserves to consider itself free. The insecurity of Canadians about their freedom is iterated in both *The Forest of Bourg-Marie* and *Search for a Canadian*, and so it must have been particularly irksome to Harrison. Both the Americans and the Canadians in Harrison's novels embody 'typical,' perhaps stereotypical, attitudes of the day and thus show the problem of communicating beyond their subjective, and sometimes defensive, positions.

In one plot development, Jansen encourages Lady Trant to open a *salon*, a political forum where Canadians might cultivate ideals for developing an "independent constituency"(*SFC* 161). He names several people who might help in developing this venue, ending his list with the suggestion that she "try and get hold of the French" (*SFC* 161). However, Lady Trant balks at his suggestion, asking, "But where does Loyalty come in in this scheme of yours? May I not be presented at Court anymore? Must we give up holding Drawingrooms? Shall five o'clock tea go out of fashion, and there be no more cakes and ale? I'm afraid you are undermining my loyal British instincts" (*SFC* 161). This scene demonstrates the peculiarly Canadian tension between American ideals and British fealty that left many of Harrison's contemporaries feeling in political limbo. On the one reading, it advocates maintaining British traditions; on the other, it satirizes Canadian narrow-mindedness. Again, Harrison's ambivalence about nationalism is shown in her writing.

In his search for a true Canadian, Jansen encounters various nationalist factions, including "Nationalists, Commercial Unionists, Imperial Federationists, Annexationists, Independent Federalists, Rouge and Bleu and Liberal Conservatives,… Citizens of the Dominion, and Citizens of the Empire, and Imperial Unionists" (*SFC* 166). This list satirizes the political variety in Canada, and the difficulty of uniting as one political alliance. Then Jansen comes upon a pamphlet from the Imperial Unionists, written by Percivale, and feels he has discovered his patriot, his Canadian.

With Percivale, a poet as well as a political patriot, Jansen engages in conversations about literature and politics. Percivale points out the lack of literary culture in Canada, explaining, "Literature is very slow, and to succeed in pure literature is the slowest of all things. But I mean to keep on. There is no market for poetic wares in Canada; there is no recognition, no gratitude" (*SFC* 216). Jansen's response to Percivale is optimistic:[38] "That will come. [...] The destiny of Canada is a pregnant subject. Is she to be wrenched, or to wrench herself from England? Is she to affiliate with us? Is she—can she become independent?" (*SFC* 216). Percivale objects, explaining that all of the different forms of nationalism make a single ideal impossible. Any simple union, he implies, would require disenfranchising some of the factions when they all have the right to be heard. He also conveys the desire for fame and international status for Canada, not for himself, through his own writing. Percivale is Harrison's most sympathetic character, at once friendly to the sympathetic American, but devoted to Canada with its multiple cultures clamouring for power.

As in *The Forest of Bourg-Marie*, Harrison's most astute commentary on Canadian nationalism and culture comes in her examination of French Canada, as filtered through the American eyes of Josiah Jansen. In a meeting with Mrs.

Fonblanque, author of "My Travels Abroad, or A Simple Woman's Diary," Jansen is presented with a jaded view of the Canadian literary scene:

> "About England, is it?" said Mr. Jansen, with a sudden loss of interest. "But I suppose you have already written about Canada. Perhaps exhausted the subject, for aught I know. You see—there must be a good many Canadian books which do not reach us."
>
> "About Canada!" exclaimed the lady. "Dear me, no! Why, what is there to say about Canada? Anything that can be said, has been said. You have read Mrs. Moodie, of course."
>
> The American reflected. "Well, I suppose there isn't very much," he said, stroking his beard. "However there are the French. Don't you think that something may be done with them some day?"
>
> "The French!" cried she. "Oh, you need never *meet* the French, you know! Except the nice ones – like Lady Dupont, of course. *I* hardly ever do. There are old families among them, certainly, but they are fearfully bigoted, terribly bigoted and narrow. They are most dreadfully ignorant, too. A really alarming state of ignorance prevails among them, particularly below Montreal. They never vaccinate, you know." (*SFC* 237-38)

Harrison's passage is rich with political satire, with Mrs. Fonblanque spouting her prejudices about French-Canadians, while the contemplative American questions the seeming invisibility of Canada as a literary subject to its own people. In asserting that Susanna Moodie's pioneering works are the only Canadian book worth reading, Fonblanque demonstrates the Canadian subservience to the British point of view on Canada instead of creating its own. (This view is somewhat ironic, as Harrison herself might be accused of doing this very thing in some of her poetry.[39]) Yet Jansen's insistence on considering "the French" reflects Harrison's position. Thus, the many cultures influencing Canada make it difficult to characterize.

In *Search for a Canadian*, Harrison counterpoises the Canadian and American perspectives on Canada's potential, both politically and culturally. Fonblanque, the English-Canadian with the French-sounding name, represents the Canadian who is loyal to England to the detriment of a distinctive Canadian cultural identity, and who falls back on stereotypes of French-Canadians out of ignorance and a sense of cultural dominance. By invoking the positive effect that French-Canadians and French-Canadian culture can bring to Canadian identity, through the eyes of Jansen, Harrison gives voice to her conviction that the French must be integrated into a unique and independent cultural ideal for Canada.

Throughout *Search for a Canadian*, Harrison examines the difficulties of Canadian nationalism through the eyes of an American observer. In so doing, she distances herself by creating a mediator in Josiah Jansen, who brings an outside perspective, and is therefore able to take a more neutral stance on the various factions of nationalism at work within Canada.

II.v The Place of Literature on the National Scene

Harrison's work establishes her position as a defender of "Canada for all Canadians" notwithstanding the conflict inherent in two remote, independent political and cultural solitudes. Both *The Forest of Bourg-Marie* and *Search for a Canadian* present characters who struggle with varying ideas about nationalism in Canada. While it seems impossible to unite all of Canada under one uniform national ideal, Harrison explores and exposes many of the nationalist factions with both a sense of humour and a sense of ominousness should people remain unwilling to accept the multicultural, multi-political, multi-historical ideas that comprise Canada.

In the American writer William Dean Howells, a New Englander who was also a critic and editor for the *Atlantic Monthly* (1871-81) and later for *Harper's Magazine* (1886-91), Harrison found a sympathetic ear on the topic of Canada (Drabble 273). Howells was a champion of realism in American literature, and his novel *The Wedding Journey* is set partly in Canada. He had many ties with Canadian authors, and in 1897, Harrison published an article, "William Dean Howells: An Interview" in Toronto's *Massey's Magazine*.[40] The interview turned into a discussion in which the interviewer also expressed her views. One exchange demonstrates Harrison's opinions on nationalism and Canada's budding literary scene:

> [Howells]: "Tell me—why has not Canada done more in fiction?"
>
> [Seranus]: "Canada is the grave of a good deal of talent, [...] and we (speaking of Canadian authors) have sometimes difficulty in impressing ourselves on foreign publishers, the only publishers worth anything to us. A great deal of good work is done in Canada which does not find its way into other countries. And there may be work which is a little too good for Canada, and yet, not quite good enough for English or American markets. Then, if we are to excel in local colour, we must remain in Canada in order to observe it, live it, so to speak, and so—you see," I ended weakly. Mr. Howells smiled in full sympathy. (Harrison, "Howells" 334)

Harrison admits her concerns for the Canadian literary scene, which was dependent on the U.S. and Britain for its publishers and critics. Her comparison—of work that "is a little too good for Canada" but might still not be "good enough" for the United States or Britain—shows the consistently modest, underdog feeling most Canadians had (and have) about their early literature. However, Harrison's frustrations with Canada cannot suppress an optimism about literary talent in Canada and its capacity for development. She is publicly arguing that very good literary work, like her own, is written in and about Canada, but without the appeal to the larger markets of Britain or the U.S., much of it gets neglected, overlooked, and shelved before it can find its audience. The image of Canada as "the grave of a great deal of talent" makes a strong point about the difference between what is being created there, and how it is nationally and internationally perceived.

Harrison considered the creation of Canadian literature an important and worthwhile task in the late nineteenth century. She saw it as integral to the creation of Canadian national identity, and recognized it as especially challenging given the outside national, literary, and cultural influences of England, France, and the United States. Harrison's national discourse reflects English-Canadian feelings of the time—fear of annexation by the U.S., loyalty to and dependency on the empire, concern about French Canada and the notions of stereotypes surrounding them, and the independent pursuit of Canadian identity. However fragmented the dominion might be, she also makes a case for Canada as creative, multicultural, and diverse. Harrison's works and her self-promotion show that not only is there potential in Canada for literary and cultural growth, but it is already in the works, if only the publishing world and the reading public would give it a chance.

II.vi What remains: The Literary Reputation

In February, 1916, E.J. Hathaway,[41] a Canadian historical biographer, wrote an article entitled "Montreal as a Background for Fiction" for the literary weekly magazine *Saturday Night*.[42] In the article, Hathaway declares, "Perhaps no city in America, with the single exception of Quebec, offers greater opportunities to the writer of romance than does Montreal, and yet few have been more neglected" (Hathaway n.pag.). He goes on to list the poets who "have made up for [the novelists'] neglect," and then also lists writers who have used Montreal as a setting for fiction. He highlights one Canadian novel, *Marjorie's Canadian Winter* by Agnes Maule Machar,[43] and works by two Americans, *Their Wedding Journey* by William Dean Howells, and the novels of Mary Hartwell Catherwood, among others. He concludes:

> It will be seen that while certain phases of the history of the city have been used by writers of fiction, the real and essential Montreal has not

> yet been touched. Here is an untilled field ready for the plough. Here is a city in which the modern and the medieval rub shoulders together, where French-Canadian and Anglo-Canadian live side by side, and Roman Catholic and Protestant are working together for a common cause. Here, ready at hand, is a background three centuries in extent—a worthy rival to Quebec, which as yet is the richest literary field Canada has produced. (Hathaway n.pag.)

Upon reading Hathaway's article, Susie Frances Harrison was infuriated at having been overlooked. Although Hathaway's article emphasizes Montreal, he includes authors who use other parts of Quebec as settings, and still, perhaps because many of her works were out-of-print or because it had been some time since she had published widely, he ignores Harrison. By this point in her career, Harrison was widely acknowledged as a writer of local colour, whose most common subject was Lower Canada and French Canadian culture; besides the villanelles and novels, she had written many short stories set in Quebec.[44] Early in her career, critics had recognized Harrison's work for depicting French Canada, its people and culture. Ethelwyn Wetherald, in her portrait of Harrison for *The Week* (22 March 1888), writes:

> The aim and direction of Mrs. Harrison's literary work is distinctively French-Canadian. The interesting and picturesque features of Montreal, which are finely reflected in her *Rime of the Gray Citie* [a poem], made a marked impression on her young imagination. Indeed, the chief sources of "Seranus'" literary inspiration have always lain in Lower Canada [...] Patriotism may be cherished by the ordinary Canadian as a fit and proper sentiment, but for it to thrill his imagination and touch his heart it is necessary that he should dwell in Lower Canada. (Wetherald, "Seranus" 267-8)

Presumably, Hathaway was unaware of the reaction his omission would incite. Harrison wrote to him, stating the case for her position as a writer about Lower Canada, and she challenged Hathaway to be accountable for his oversight:

> With reference to your article in the current number of "Saturday Night" on Canadian writers and "Montreal," I must confess that I am somewhat surprised to see no mention of my name. It may be that you are absolutely ignorant of what my achievements are in the field of French-Canadian life, landscape and thought; if so, I must of course acquit you of willingly leaving me out. On the other hand, my work has always been well received by the best critics both here and in

> England and the U.S. and I feel that there must be some explanation from you which I will await. I am not asking for favourable criticism, I am simply inquiring why in an article which is chiefly a list of writers, I have been completely passed over. Both in poetry and fiction and in many, *many* articles, I have been picturing French Canada now for a good many years and I can assure you, if you choose to consult our most eminent critics and others interested in our entire literature, they will, in their turn, say a good word for me.
>
> I should like to know if in any way you can make me some reparation, and if you really have never heard of or encountered any of my books etc. I shall be happy to send you them. I take the liberty of enclosing a few press notices of my last French-Canadian novel for which I was paid one hundred pounds by the publishers Hodder & Stoughton in Eng. and the Musson Co. of Toronto. (Harrison letter to Hathaway, 19 February 1916)

In a subsequent letter to Hathaway,[45] Harrison reveals that Hathaway acknowledged her novel *Ringfield* in his response to her, making it clear that he was aware of her writing. The sting of this admission provoked Harrison's defensiveness, and in her next letter, she lists examples by chapter and page number to show Hathaway her use of Montreal and Quebec in *Ringfield*. She writes:

> *My* Montreal is not the easy historical one of some writers. You are quite right; it is a splendid field for fiction and I have long hoped to make more use of it, but Canada always wants to be written up as such a splendid country etc., I see other things in the people.
>
> In my book of Poems, there is "The Rime of the Grey Citie," widely read at one time, and a good deal of my other work has been as you describe that of D. C. Scott,[46] connected with the villages around Montreal.
>
> What struck me most of all was that you could absolutely ignore me, (because my work might have been mentioned in one line, as a side issue) and yet manage to refer—if I must allude to a fellow writer—in lengthy terms to a lady who is about as much identified with Lower Canada as I am—with Alaska or India![47] My gifts, whatever they are, and I am willing to admit they are but small, have, however, been almost entirely devoted to Lower Canada, and I therefore feel much humiliation and disappointment when I encounter this sort of thing [ie. neglect by a journalist in her own country], and

> one feels—what is the use of doing or trying to do good work, when gladly one will shake the dust of Canada off one's feet and go somewhere where 'Canadian Literature' is not known! (Harrison letter to Hathaway 23 February 1916)

Harrison's correspondence with E.J. Hathaway makes explicit the kinds of barriers she felt she faced throughout her career as a writer and a musician, suffering the consequences of her ideas on nationalism in poetry and fiction, and thus in the end being considered a minor Canadian woman writer. Harrison resented Hathaway's failure to acknowledge her literary achievements in the very area that he had made his special focus, and she cannot hide her disappointment and grief at his complete neglect of her literary depictions of Lower Canada. Her direct reference to Robert Barr's famous quotation (to "get over the border as soon as you can; come to London or go to New York; shake the dust of Canada from your feet") shows her awareness not only of the Canadian writing climate, but also her despair at going unrecognized *in Canada* for writing about Canada.

After the turn of the century, it became especially hard for Harrison to publish. "For all that Harrison celebrated Canada in her writing," Carrie MacMillan writes,

> she also sought recognition beyond her country, claiming, one suspects, not only a place for herself but also for Canada in international circles. [...] Although Harrison published in periodicals abroad and her novels were published in London, [...] she never gained a strong reputation abroad, perhaps because of her distinctly Canadian settings and concerns. (MacMillan 136)

Harrison was aware of the difficulties of being a Canadian and a woman writer in her day, but she focused on the national issue of developing a Canadian literature without regard for the gender issue that contributed to her difficulty in getting the recognition she sought. It was quite possibly a case of pursuing the greater ideal; by improving the promotion of Canadian literature overall, all Canadian writers would benefit regardless of gender.

Harrison persisted in her efforts to publish, and, although she was neither rewarded in sales nor in public recognition, she continued to find supporters. In 1924, E. S. Caswell,[48] then the secretary-treasurer of the Public Library of Toronto, wrote a letter to Lorne Pierce[49] asking that Harrison's work be reprinted:

> I consider Mrs. Harrison one of the most gifted of our writers. She is not so well known as she should be for her verse, as her book "Pine, Rose & Fleur-de-lis" is out of print. I consider it one of the best of

> our Canadian books, while her two novels, "The Forest of Bourg-Marie" and "Ringfield" are notable in our literature of fiction. I hope you will take an interest in her. We should have for our libraries and bookshelves either a new edition of "Pine, Rose, +c." or a complete collection of her poetry. I have a very high opinion of her work. She has had high compliments from abroad. (Caswell letter to Pierce, 20 June 1924)

Caswell made the point that many critics would make about Susie Frances Harrison over the course of her career and in the years after her death: that she was not as well known for her poetry and her fiction as she ought to have been. Wetherald, for example, in her piece on Harrison in *The Week* (22 March 1888), concludes: "She will not fail of some measure of success even in this country, though the limits of that success could not easily be fixed, were the conditions of intellectual work other than they are in Canada." Forty-four years later, in an article on Harrison in 1932, Marjory Willison agrees with Wetherald's assessment: "Mrs. J.W.F. Harrison is a striking example of a Canadian writer whose work, too seldom mentioned, will survive by reason of its merit" (80). Willison explains, "As far as one is aware, all the books which contain the work of this gifted writer are now out of print. They may be read only in libraries. Such a condition of affairs reveals how little care is taken of productions which should be treasured, and not forgotten" (81). The next year, in 1933, poet and writer Katherine Hale wrote an address "Some Women Writers of Canada" in which she singled out Harrison. It was delivered before a gathering of the Canadian Author's Association[50]:

> At a later period two significant women writers are Mrs. S. Frances Harrison, ('Seranus') now of Toronto, and Isabella Valancy Crawford, of Peterborough. Mrs. Harrison, as assistant editor of 'The Week,' helped to introduce Miss Crawford to a limited but observant class of readers. Her own short stories, essays and poems, especially those relating to French Canada, are more important than has been generally realized; which relates to the fact that publishers are often chary of a distinctly naïve and genuine touch. (Hale "Our Women," 9)

The opinion that Harrison was under-recognized as a writer followed her throughout her career, and she could not overcome it by sustaining either popular or commercial success. Harrison's ambitious writing efforts across a number of genres, as well as her spirited endeavours to both cultivate a recognizable, if not a recognized, public self and to keep publishing over the course of her career gained her few material or popular rewards. Her legacy is to be remembered as a minor writer in post-

Confederation Canada. The name "Seranus" did not come to be "identified with all that is artistic in the Dominion," as she had hoped, but Susie Frances Harrison deserves to be identified with the complex views of developing nationalisms in late nineteenth-century Canada, and with a desire to discover an identifiable Canadian culture and to express it in a distinctive literature worthy of assuming its place on the international map.

Notes

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[1] Edmund Clarence Stedman lived from 1833-1908. He was a successful Wall Street banker as well as poet and critic. He published successful anthologies, including *A Victorian Anthology* (1895) and *An American Anthology* (1900) (*Columbia Encyclopedia Online.* 23 April 2003 <http://www.bartleby.com>).

[2] In 1873, the Pacific Scandal was a major event in Canadian history. The Conservative government led by Sir John A. Macdonald had accepted campaign funds from Sir Hugh Allan in return for a promise to award Allan's syndicate the contract to build the Canadian Pacific Railway. Macdonald stated that the contract and the contributions were unconnected, but this idea was received with skepticism even within his own party. Donald A. Smith (later Lord Strathcona) separated his allegiance from Macdonald over the crisis, and his public expression of doubt about the Prime Minister was partly responsible for the Conservative administration's downfall. The government was forced to resign because of the scandal and the Conservatives were badly defeated in the following election (Finkel et al. 44).

[3] In total, Harrison includes eight of her own poems (or excerpts from them) out of 365 in *The Canadian Birthday Book.* Some other writers are repeated throughout her day book, notably Isabella Valancey Crawford receives sixteen entries; Octave Crémazie "by common consent the greatest poet French Canada has produced as regards spontaneity and freshness of genius" receives twelve entries; Charles Heavysege receives eight entries; Ethelwyn Wetherald receives three entries.

[4] Cf. Carrie MacMillan, "Susan Frances Harrison ('Seranus'): Paths through the Ancient Forest," *Silenced Sextet: Six Nineteenth-Century Canadian Women Novelists*. Eds. MacMillan, McMullen and Waterson (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's UP, 1992): 107-36; Carole Gerson, "Susan Frances Harrison," *Dictionary of Literary Biography* 99 (1990): 145-47; Elaine Keillor, "Harrison, Susie Frances," *Encyclopedia of Music in Canada*. Eds. Helmut Kallman et al. (Toronto: U of Toronto Press, 1992): 587; Fred Cogswell, "*The Forest of Bourg-Marie*; an Ancestor of *Maria Chapdelaine* and *Trente Arpents*." *Journal of Canadian Fiction* 2 (Summer 1973): 199-200.

[5] The *Canadian Illustrated News* was published out of Montreal from 1869-83 (Robert H. Blackburn, ed., *A Joint Catalogue of Serials in the Libraries of Toronto*, 5th ed., Toronto: U of Toronto Press, 1953: 139.)

[6] *Stewart's Literary Quarterly Magazine, Devoted to Light and Entertaining Literature*, was published out of Saint John, New Brunswick, from Apr. 1867-Oct. 1872. It "was the only Canadian magazine of its day to rely entirely on original contributions," and it was initiated to counter "trashy weeklies and immoral monthlies' from the United States" (Parker 1097).

[7] *Belford's Monthly Magazine: A Magazine of Literature and Art* was printed in Toronto by Hunter, Rose, and Company from Dec. 1876 until 1878. In 1878, *Belford's Monthly* and *The Canadian Monthly* merged to become *Rose-Belford's Canadian Monthly and National Review*, and it was printed out of Toronto until 1882 (Smiley "Rose," 1016).

[8] *Nash's Pall Mall Magazine* was published out of London, England from May 1893-September 1937. (Robert H. Blackburn, ed., *A Joint Catalogue of Serials in the Libraries of Toronto*, 5th ed., Toronto: U of T Press, 1953: 385.)

[9] Because there is no exhaustive periodical index for early American serials, I have had to rely on university library catalogues for information. There are several listings for periodicals called *American Magazine* in the Columbia University library catalogue, but the most likely one is a periodical run out of New York from 1906-56 (<www.columbia.edu/cu/lweb/eresources/clio.html>).

[10] The Ottawa Philharmonic Society had originally been formed in the 1870s, but crumbled before the end of the decade; it was revived by John Harrison in 1880. Thereafter, he conducted many major performances, including the first Canadian performances of Mendelssohn's incidental music in collaboration with Sophocles' dramas *Antigone* and *Oedipus at Colonos* (Lock 586). In an "At the Mermaid Inn" article in 1893, Duncan Campbell Scott recognized John Harrison's contribution to Canadian culture through his promotion of music in Ottawa:

> It is, I say, wonderful what a musician of broad views and with an interest in all the arts can accomplish, not only in the sphere of his own but in the cause of art generally. Such a man, Mr J. W. F. Harrison, succeeded in transforming the musical life of Ottawa, and, with his genial interest in everything artistic, he gave an impulse to culture which cannot be exaggerated. It is fortunate for a Canadian city to have its music in the care of a man who is more than a musician. (Scott in Campbell, "Mermaid Inn" 292)

Further praise of John Harrison's contribution to musical life in Canada appeared late in the twentieth century: "The name of Mr. J. W. F. Harrison is inseparably connected with the history of music in Canada" (Duff and Yates 134).

[11] According to Elaine Keillor, in February 1879, Harrison sang in a performance of Arthur A. Clappé's *Canada's Welcome: A Masque* at the Grand Opera House in Ottawa (Keillor ms.2). The composition and performance were played for the new Governor-General of Canada, Lord Lansdowne, the Marquis of Lorne and his wife, Princess Louise (Keillor ms.2). According to a newspaper article in the *Ottawa Advance* preserved in the National Archives of Canada in Ottawa, in 1883, Lord Lansdowne and his wife Princess Louise made another official visit to Canada. The Ottawa Philharmonic Society, led by John Harrison, invited them to a concert on 30 October 1883. For this occasion, Susie Frances Harrison wrote the words and arranged the music to the *Song of Welcome to Lord Lansdowne* ("Governor-General" n. pag.). The song is similar to many patriotic poems of the day in support of imperialism, the necessary sentiment given the occasion.

[12] According to Lorraine McMullen, *The Week: The Canadian Journal of Politics, Society, and Literature* was founded in 1883 and published out of Toronto until 1896 (McMullen, "Week" 1173).

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[13] Sarepta is the pseudonym of poet Edward Burrough Brownlow, who lived from 1857-1895 (Gandolfo 5).

[14] Charles Belford was the editor of the leading Conservative newspaper, *The Mail*, in Canada. He was from a family of publishing entrepreneurs who established first Belford Brothers Publishing, and later Belford, Clark, & Co. Publishing Company. He died in 1875.

[15] Harrison's unpublished novel manuscripts were generously given to me by Freya Godard, Harrison's grand-niece, for the research purposes of this dissertation. The Harrison family had preserved copies of two novels, *The Rock, a Romance of Gaspé Beach* and *Search for a Canadian*. *The Rock*, unfortunately, is missing its last page.

[16] The three-act opera *Pipandor* was orchestrally composed by Harrison with a libretto by Frederick A. Dixon. It took two years to write, and was one of Harrison's most ambitious projects. It is best described in the words of Ethelwyn Wetherald, who had occasion to learn about it from its composer, and perhaps even to hear parts of it or to read it for herself:

> The scenes, incidents, and motifs of this opera are old French, but running through it are a number of French-Canadian songs, the music of which has been re-arranged and adapted by Seranus to Dixon's patter songs and comic verse. The whole forms an elaborate opera, which would be very effective on the stage if the necessary funds could be secured to mount the opera, supply the scenery and costumes, and train the choruses of principal people in the cast. A great deal of the fine work of the old Breton and Norman poets and musicians enriches this opera, and its thoroughly national character should, were it brought out in Canada, make it a decided success. (Wetherald, "Seranus" 267)

Harrison never heard her opera performed, despite her efforts to get it published or staged in Canada, the United States and England. Wetherald points out perhaps its biggest flaw on the international stage: its Canadian content. Wetherald's description emphasizes the French and English influences on the opera. She goes on to compare the opera to a Gilbert and Sullivan production, showing Harrison's musical influences as well. Harrison's opera *Pipandor* can be viewed as a microcosm to her works because it shows her ambition and nerve to write the first Canadian comic opera, as well as her commitment to Canada as a valid subject that runs through all of her works.

[17] Evidence for Harrison's dedicated but small readership comes from letters between Harrison and Miss Hume, secretary at the Ryerson Press. Between November 1928 and January 1929, after the publication of *Later Poems and New Villanelles* by Ryerson Press, Harrison sent letters to Hume giving names, addresses and the number of copies to be sent to family and friends who had ordered copies from her. These letters are housed at the Queen's University Archives, Lorne Pierce Collection, in Kingston, Ontario.

[18] Lorne Pierce lived from 1890-1961. According to John Webster Grant, he became the literary advisor to Ryerson Press in 1920, and was its editor from 1922-1960. As an influential

promoter of Canadian literature, he developed the field through his many publications of poetry, Canadian history, and his contributions to anthologies (Grant, "Pierce"920).

[19] In this letter, Harrison explains that they had to sell their Rosedale house, and that they are renting in the Danforth area of Toronto, "easily found but a long way from town etc. We shall be here for the winter, and then I do not know where." The suggestion is that the Harrisons could no longer afford to own their home in the affluent neighbourhood of Rosedale, and that they would have to move and rent as they could in the near future.

[20] According to John Webster Grant, the Ryerson Press began as a result of a break between Canadian Methodists and the American Methodist Episcopal Church in 1828, and "they determined at the same meeting to secure a press and to begin a journal and book room" ("Ryerson," 1026). The Methodist Book Room was established in Toronto in 1829, and it originally issued denominational publications, but it moved to general trade books in 1935. It was named the 'Ryerson Press' in 1919, after its first editor, Egerton Ryerson (1803-82). William Briggs became the Book Steward for Ryerson Press in 1879, and he built the business revenue through British and American firms in order to create a Canadian list of publications. E.S. Caswell joined the Press in 1881 and continued to broaden its scope in Canada. Lorne Pierce became the Ryerson Press editor from 1922-60. C.H. Dickinson was the Book Steward at the Press from 1937-64. In 1970, due to losses incurred by buying an expensive colour press, the Ryerson Press was sold to the American firm, McGraw-Hill (Grant, "Ryerson" 1026-27).

[21] In 1926, the Canadian Centre of International P.E.N. was founded in Montreal by John Galsworthy. It was based on the world association of writers, editors, and publishers first founded in London, England. The acronym PEN stands for "poets, essayists, editors, novelists." It was originally a non-political organization, and in Canada, this meant that annual literary meetings were held in Montreal, or delegates were sent to the annual Congresses overseas. In its modern incarnation, P.E.N. addresses political issues affecting human rights and freedom of expression; it is also a fundraising club to help liberate international authors whose civil rights have been violated through imprisonment, censorship, or otherwise because of their writing (History of the Canadian P.E.N. Centre brochure courtesy <http://www.pencanada.ca>).

[22] Louis Riel lived from 1844-1885. He is remembered as a Canadian political leader who

> headed the rebellion of the Métis at Red River Settlement (now in Manitoba) in 1869 to protest against the planned transfer of the territorial holdings of the Hudson's Bay Company to Canadian jurisdiction; forming a provisional government with himself at its head, he oversaw negotiations for acceptable terms for union with Canada, including the establishment of the province of Manitoba, and was executed for treason after leading the Northwest Rebellion (1884-5). (Barber 1240)

[23] Goldwin Smith (1823-1910) was born in Reading, England, educated at Oxford, and became known internationally as a controversial journalist. According to Smiley, he was a professor

of modern history at Oxford. In 1866, he accepted a professorship in Ithaca, New York, which brought him to North America. He donated his library to the university, and tried to educate Americans about England, while learning about America himself. In 1871 he moved to Toronto. He married in 1875, and because of his family inheritance and his wife's money, he lived in affluence in Canada. He used his money for charitable works and to establish periodicals in Canada. (Smiley "Smith,"1077-78)

[24] Agnes Maule Machar lived from 1837-1927, and she was a contemporary of Harrison's and Wetherald's. She sometimes used the pseudonym "Fidelis," and she was a writer of fiction, poetry, and numerous articles and essays for American, British, and Canadian periodicals (MacGillivray, "Machar" 700). According to MacGillivray, she frequently wrote about "such issues as public education, the co-education of women, social justice for the poor, and Christian belief" (700).

[25] Sara Jeannette Duncan lived from 1861-1922, and was a contemporary of Susie Frances Harrison and Ethelwyn Wetherald. She was a journalist for the *Washington Post* in 1885-6, a columnist for the Toronto *Globe* in 1886-7, and for the *Montreal Star* from 1887-8 (Tausky 345). She also wrote for *The Week* during the 1880s. In 1888, Duncan set off on a world trip with a fellow journalist. She met her husband in India, and spent the rest of her life between India and London. She wrote about Canadian social, political, cultural, and literary issues with "intelligence, vigour, and wit" (Tausky 345). She wrote many collections of sketches and novels, and some of her later works use North America as a setting (Tausky 346). *The Imperialist* (1904) now appears on Canadian literature courses and is considered a Canadian classic novel of the period.

[26] Robert Barr lived from 1850-1912. He was a Scottish immigrant to Canada, where his family settled in Windsor, Ontario. He became a teacher, and later a journalist for the *Detroit Free Press*. He had many literary friends and acquaintances such as Stephen Crane, Henry James, Joseph Conrad, and Arthur Conan Doyle. He wrote fourteen collections of sketches and short stories, and over twenty novels, none of which are well-remembered today. According to S.R. MacGillivray, "Barr exploited a popular formula for the writing of fiction" (84). Arnold Bennet wrote in his *Journals* that Barr was "an admirable specimen of the man of talent who makes of letters an honest trade, though he had not much, if any at all, feeling for literature" (qtd. in MacGillivray, "Barr" 84).

[27] Carole Gerson, in *A Purer Taste*, writes, "British and American popular taste demanded complex, sensational narratives set in places that were comfortably familiar or intriguingly exotic–Canada being seen as neither" (*Purer* 48). Yet May Agnes Fleming depicted Canada as a secondary setting in some of her novels. Fleming portrayed Canada at times as a rustic, dull place especially in comparison to England or the United States, and she portrayed Canadians as agreeable if dull people. Yet, at other times, focusing on its rural wilderness, Fleming created in Canada an exotic locale. By contrast, Harrison depicts an arguably more realistic Canada.

[28] For a definition of the villanelle, see Mark Strand and Eavan Bolan, *The Making of a Poem: A Norton Anthology of Poetic Forms*, (New York: Norton, 2000): 5-7.

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[29] Jean Passerat lived from 1534-1602 and was a French poet (McFarland 167). He wrote villanelles such as "*J'ai perdu ma tourterelle*" (I lost my turtledove), "a disguised love song" that attained popularity "amounting almost to popular-song status in its day" and which "established the pattern for all future villanelles" (Strand and Bolan 6-7).

[30] They were influences on her work, and in her poem "England," she uses the line "Nature was all in all" which was borrowed from Wordsworth's "Lines Composed a Few Miles Above Tintern Abbey on Revisiting the Banks of the Wye During a Tour. July 13, 1798," lines 72-75:

> ...For nature then
> (The coarser pleasures of my boyish days,
> And their glad animal movements all gone by)
> To me was all in all.

In creating the French Canadian villanelle, I suggest Harrison wanted both to invoke the poetic pastoral history into Canada, and to create the Canadian pastoral.

[31] The English poets whom McFarland names as the earliest to revive the villanelle and bring it into a new language are Andrew Lang, W. E. Henley, Ernest Dowson, James Dickey, and Dylan Thomas. These poets are all male, and they were writing villanelles around the same time that Harrison published *Pine, Rose, and Fleur de lis* (with the exception of Thomas, who wrote later).

[32] Its structure may have been influenced by Charles Sangster's well-known poem, *The St. Lawrence and the Saguenay* (1856), as the sequences follow the same geographical route. However, in subject matter, the two poems vary considerably.

[33] It actually worked for over a century. Until the 1950s, when "the Quiet Revolution" broke the dominance of the clergy-dominated agrarian bias in Quebec, the birth-rate was 65 per thousand, one of the highest in the world. (Since the 1960s, Quebec's birth rate has dropped to about 13 per thousand, one of the lowest in Canada.)

[34] Thomas Chandler Haliburton lived from 1796-1865. He was a native of Windsor, Nova Scotia, and he became a lawyer and a judge. He had literary ambitions, and wrote about the local Nova Scotian history. He also wrote the character Sam Slick, an American clock salesman in Canada who speaks in aphorisms (Parker, "Haliburton" 509-12).

[35] The date handwritten (in Harrison's script) on the *Search for a Canadian* manuscript is 1887.

[36] Mikel represents "the agrarian habitant [that] became a symbol of natural goodness,"according to W.H. New. (92).

[37] *Maria Chapdelaine* was written by Louis Hémon and published in 1916. It is set in Lac St. Jean, Quebec, and is a *roman de la terre*, or an "agricultural novel" that portrays the harshness of

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working the land (Socken 728-29). Maria must choose who to marry after her betrothed is killed. She can marry Lorenzo Surprenant, who will take her to the United States for an easier life, or she can choose to marry Eutrope Gagnon, who will continue to farm the harsh land. Maria chooses Eutrope, and, according to Paul Socken, "this devotion symbolizes Quebec's determined struggle to secure a foothold for rural, Catholic, French society away from the onslaught of modern, urban, English-dominated life" (Socken 729). *Trente Arpents* was written by Ringuet and published in 1938. It is set in Trois-Rivières and is another agricultural novel about Euchariste Moisan, "who is entirely devoted to his land. After years of success—the envy of his neighbours—the sale of a piece of his land and the failure of a law-suit against one of his neighbours bring Euchariste humiliation and ruin. His son Etienne persuades Euchariste to cede his land to him and to visit his favourite son Ephren in the USA" (Cotnam 1139). Etienne refuses to send his father the money for a return ticket to his village, and Euchariste is projected to die in America, away from his beloved land, and isolated in a country where he can only speak and be understood by his son. According to Jacques Cotnam, the novel "opposes progress to traditions, city life to rural life, younger to older generations, and life to death. Above all, it denounces the farmer's subservience to his land" (Cotnam 1139).

[38] In fact, Jansen's response represents the voice of William Dean Howells, to whom Harrison makes reference in the Preface to the novel. Howells' novel *The Wedding Journey* (1871) was set in Canada, and, on the topic of Canada and possible annexation with the United States, he wrote, "Nothing fortunately seems to be further from the Canadian mind than to be joined to an unsympathetic half-brother like ourselves; better two great nations, side by side, than a union of discordant traditions and ideas" (*SFC* Preface).

[39] In poems such as "England" and "Niagara Falls in Winter," from *Pine, Rose, and Fleur de lis*, Harrison conveys a yearning for the years of traditions and the tamed landscape of England in direct comparison to Canada. "England" even ends with the line, "Dear England! I– / I have not–yet I fain had been–thy child!"

[40] William Dean Howells lived from 1837-1920. He was an American novelist, and a contemporary and friend of Henry James.

[41] Ernest Jackson Hathaway was a Canadian writer and journalist. He lived from 1871-1930, and resided in Toronto. In articles, he wrote about Canadian writers such as Bliss Carman and L.M. Montgomery, and he also wrote the non-fiction book, *The Story of the Old Fort at Toronto* (1929) (*Early Canadiana Online*, August 2002 <http://www.canadiana.org>).

[42] *Saturday Night* was a literary magazine published out of Toronto starting in 1887, and it continued to be published until the early twenty-first century (Francis 663).

[44] While Harrison uses French-Canadian Quebec as her subject matter and setting in many works—poetry, short stories, novels, lectures–she more often focused on rural Quebec or Quebec City than on Montreal, although there are references to Montreal as in the poem "The Rime of the Gray Citie," and the character Pauline Clairville in *Ringfield* returns to Montreal to carry on an acting career in theatre.

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[45] Harrison's letters to Hathaway are held in the General Manuscript Collection, Thomas Fisher Rare Book Room, University of Toronto.

[46] Duncan Campbell Scott lived from 1862-1947. He became a civil servant for John A. Macdonald's government, working in for the Department of Indian Affairs. He was a prominent poet, who is remembered as one of the "Confederation poets," and along with Archibald Lampman and William Wilfred Campbell, he was one of the authors of the "At the Mermaid Inn" articles that appeared in the *Globe* in 1892-93 (Wicken, "Scott" 1042-45).

[47] I believe Harrison is alluding to American novelist Mary Hartwell Catherwood – "as much identified with Lower Canada as I am–with Alaska or India!"– as the undeserving writer who receives quite extensive notice from Hathaway in his article. He admits Catherwood's work "in its romantic features, does not pretend to historical accuracy" (Hathaway n. pag.). Harrison's reaction appears envious and even angry that Catherwell, an American, would receive such an endorsement in a Canadian magazine, while she was completely overlooked.

[48] Edward Caswell lived from 1861-1938. He began his career working for a newspaper, but moved into publishing when he accepted a position at the Methodist Book and Publishing House in 1881, where he worked alongside William Briggs, who became a well-known early Canadian publisher himself (Peterman 181). Caswell "did much of the editorial work and prepared many letters that William Briggs signed," and he was influential in the publication of works by many early Canadian writers including Catharine Parr Traill, Isabella Valancy Crawford, Nellie McClung, and Charles G.D. Roberts, among others (Peterman 181). Caswell left the MBPH in 1908 to take the better-waged position as assistant librarian and secretary-treasurer of the Toronto Public Library in 1908 (Peterman, "Caswell" 181).

[49] See Grant "Pierce," 920.

[50] Because "Mrs. Garvin (Katherine Hale), [had] sailed for Europe, her paper on 'Our Women Writers of Canada' was read by Mrs. Howard," according to the account in *The Author's Bulletin* Vol. XI.I (Sept. 1933): 9-10.

CHAPTER THREE

"When you are far then are you most my own": Social Purity, Sexuality, and the Love Poetry of Ethelwyn Wetherald

Of Love's fair ministers thou art the chief.
To jaded souls, asleep beside their vows,
Thou givest hopes, keen joys and vague alarms;
Beneath thy touch the brown and yellow leaf
Turns to pink blossom, and the spring-bright boughs
Frame lovers running to each other's arms.
-- Ethelwyn Wetherald "Absence," (1902)

Around 1893, journalist and poet Ethelwyn Wetherald responded to a letter from poet William Wilfred Campbell[1] in which he must have requested that she read her work publicly. "I daresay it's a serious defect in my character but if I had to choose between reading my 'poetry' and my love letters in public I should seriously incline to the latter," she replied. "There's a real literary value in them—but I am not so sure of the 'poetry'" (Wetherald letter to Campbell 16 April [1893]). Responding later to what must have been Campbell's persistence, Wetherald gives a more serious explanation for her reluctance, in terms of her modesty and stage fright:

> It would be a perfect delight to me to visit in your home, and to see Ottawa, and to hear the real poets read the real poetry—but–but—to get up there before a lot of people and pretend to be something when I am nothing—no, I can't! I never read anything in public—not so much as a school girl composition without suffering acutely over it—and the

> trouble is that a public speaker or reader cannot be in distress without distressing the listeners. [...] If you are out of patience with me you may be very sure that my defects have often made me out of patience with myself. Written and printed criticism doesn't worry me in the least. It interests and often amuses me—but a cold or bored or indifferent eye—how could I stand up against it? (Wetherald letter to Campbell, 1 May [1893])

However, by this point in her career, Wetherald had established a solid journalistic reputation, and she had published a number of poems and short stories in periodicals, as well as a novel, *An Algonquin Maiden: A Romance of the Early Days of Upper Canada*, co-written with Graeme Mercer Adam. Furthermore, she maintained numerous literary correspondents and friends, many of whom were prominent writers and editors, including Campbell, E. W. Thomson,[2] John Garvin,[3] and Duncan Campbell Scott.[4] Of these correspondents, it is worth singling out John Garvin, as his name recurs throughout this chapter. Garvin was an editor at the Toronto publishing house William Briggs. He became a confidant and friend of Wetherald's as well as the editor of her collected poems late in her career. Despite her acclaimed correspondents and her achievements in writing, Wetherald expresses a self-consciousness, even a self doubt about her writing that is surprising. In comparison to a writer like Harrison, who unabashedly promoted herself to attain the recognition she felt she deserved, Wetherald distinguishes herself as a different kind of writer. Without a published collection of poems to give her credence as a "genuine poet," Wetherald was evidently not yet convinced about her place in Canadian letters.

O.J. Stevenson's biographical chapter on Wetherald cites the impressions of "an intimate friend" of Wetherald that further suggests her diffidence about self-promotion:

> "The keynote of her life," says an intimate friend, "has not been ambition, not the determined self-exploitation so common in these days, but sympathy—a quick intuitive knowledge of how another feels, the nature and extent of his private pangs, and the possibility, if any, of how they can be relieved. Do you wonder she has so many friends?" (196)

The perception that Wetherald was sensitive to others, and that her sympathetic nature outweighed her personal ambition or desire was reiterated seventy-two years later, in 1999, by Wetherald's daughter, who told me, "I can say that she was a very retiring personality and I think that this is the main reason that she has been more or less forgotten. She always gave the other person credit for doing well rather than to herself" (Rungeling letter to Chambers, 20 August 1999).[5]

Notwithstanding her jocular remark about her love letters, Ethelwyn Wetherald was better-known as a nature poet than a love poet throughout her lifetime. This is perhaps surprising, given that many of Wetherald's poems are about love. She writes about love in various manifestations—young love, heterosexual love, lesbian love, love of God, loving at a distance—and she shows a deftness of style and an originality of thought on the subject, though it is impossible to find contemporary critical opinion that credits her for it. This critical disregard of her love poetry probably has two sources. First, Wetherald cultivated a "poet in the trees" persona that was easy for critics to focus on in their articles about her nature poetry, and second, Canadian criticism on early poetry tends to consider nature poetry above or instead of love poetry. The connection between landscape and national character or nationalism in general has traditionally made nature poetry the focus of Canadian poetic criticism. Indeed, "a major reason for the concentration on the attractions and horrors of the country's landscape and seasons in early long poems on Canada," according to D.M. R. Bentley, "was the conviction that climate and scenery have a formative effect on individual and national character" (309).

In their comments on Wetherald, contemporaneous critics tended to dwell on her reclusive life on the family farm: "Yet with all her feeling for life and people this writer was always remote from either. [...] It was at that peaceful country spot, 'The

Tall Evergreens,' that she was really at home and really herself" (Hale, "Ethelwyn" 268-69). In an interview for *Everywoman's World* magazine, Wetherald herself explains, "I have always found a lot of quiet comfort in flocking by myself. I am often alone, but never lonely. I have never belonged to a club, for no better reason, I fear, than that the old lady who declared she was not a jiner!' Some people find the contact with other minds very stimulating, and I feel it sufficiently so in my correspondence and in reading my favourite magazines" (qtd. in Burkholder 38-39).

Wetherald gave up a lucrative career as a journalist in the United States to return to the family homestead at Fenwick, Ontario, where she felt she could better pursue her career as a poet. In March 1910, Wetherald's brothers built her a house in a willow tree, which her brother Sam named Camp Shelbi, which is an acronym of the types of wood used to build the cabin: "chestnut, ash, maple, pine, spruce, hemlock, elm, linden, birch, and ironwood" (Wetherald, "Reminiscences" xiii-xiv). This treehouse was a writing retreat for Wetherald, a place where she composed many of her poems, and where she occasionally slept on hot summer nights. It quickly became linked to her literary image. Critics have made much of Wetherald, the nature poet, writing in the trees, as is evidenced by Elizabeth Roberts MacDonald's article on Wetherald, "Trees and a Poet." O.J. Stevenson describes the practical utility of the tree house for Wetherald:

> One of the problems that many writers, especially women writers, have to meet is how to find a quiet place for work, away from household sounds. But Miss Wetherald at a later stage in her career had this problem solved for her in a unique way. One of her brothers built for her up among the branches of a large willow beside a brook, a small work-room, or tiny "house," which was reached by a ladder, with just room enough for a table and a couch. [...](198-9)

Similarly, Roberts MacDonald, a sister of Charles G.D. Roberts, writes, "One is not surprised to find that Miss Wetherald has a material "'House of the Trees,' built in a huge willow near a stream, where she sleeps on sultry summer nights" (54). It appealed to critics' sensibilities that a nature poet was dwelling in the natural environment of trees writing poetry because it suggested a symbiotic relationship between her life and her work, and made her seem eccentric. In an article on Wetherald for *Everywoman's World*, Mabel Burkholder visited Camp Shelbi and gave the following account: "Can't you imagine her viewing lane, and field, and woods, from her leafy retreat and then writing words like these: 'Against the winter's heaven of white, the blood / Of earth runs very quick and hot to-day'"(38). The titles of Wetherald's collections of poetry also link her with nature, such as *The House of Trees and Other Poems* (1895), *The Last Robin and Other Poems* (1907), and *Tree-*

Top Mornings (1921). The titles appear to play into the critics' tendency to romanticize her as living among the trees, and this representation may well have been deliberate on Wetherald's part. Camp Shelbi lasted for ten years, until it "was blown down in a high gale in the fall of 1920" (Wetherald, "Reminiscences" xiii).

Rather than the nature poetry for which Wetherald is usually remembered, in this study I focus on Wetherald's love poetry and her letters. Wetherald's love poems show a progression in love, and in reading her love poems and letters, I discovered her relationship with fellow poet Helena Coleman. There are potential ethical questions about reading historical personages through the lens of a different time with sexual identity as part of the recovery, because there can only ever be evidence of some aspects of a private relationship and not others. Given the prevailing heterosexual gender ideology of Wetherald's time, and the candid expressions of love in these poems and letters toward Coleman, I maintain that Wetherald's love poetry was in part overlooked to avoid discussion of what would have been considered too risqué to print, and perhaps best omitted to protect her reputation. It was not until 1969 that the federal government of Canada decriminalized sexual practices associated with homosexuality, and from that viewpoint, it is perhaps easier to begin to understand the public silence on female homosexuality in the early twentieth century in legal terms, but also in public terms that include, in this case, expressions of love through poetry. As critic Karen Dubinsky says, "In a culture that denied full political and economic citizenship to women, it is not surprising that women were denied cultural and legal control over their sexuality" (29). A closer look at Wetherald's love poems may not elevate her to "major" poet status, but it will reveal her as a poet of greater breadth than is usually granted. It will also lead us to "read" both her and her works differently, and thus provide a more diverse picture of early Canada than is usually recalled.

III.i A Poet's Life

Agnes Ethelwyn Wetherald was born in Rockwood, Ontario on April 26, 1857, the sixth of eleven children. Her family was of Irish-English descent. In 1851, her father, William Wetherald, founded and ran the Rockwood Academy, a boarding school for boys (Garvin, "Introduction" vii; Wetherald, "My Father" 6-7). In 1864, he left his position as principal at Rockwood and moved the family to Pennsylvania, where he was the superintendent of Haverford College (Garvin, "Introduction" vii). Two years later, in 1866, he moved the family back to Chantler, Ontario, near Fenwick, where he bought a fruit and dairy farm. Later in life, William Wetherald became an ordained Quaker minister, and devoted himself to his religious duties and to counselling others (Garvin, "Introduction" vii).[6]

Ethelwyn Wetherald was educated away from home, first at the Friends Boarding School at Union Springs, New York, and later at Pickering College in Ontario. When she was seventeen, she sold her first poem to *St. Nicholas Magazine*,[7] a periodical for young people published in New York (Wetherald, "Reminiscences" xi; Hale 268). From 1880-82, when she was in her early twenties, Wetherald published a series of short stories in *Rose-Belford's Canadian Monthly*.[8] In 1886, she began contributing essays and sketches to the Toronto newspaper, the *Globe*, under the pseudonym Bel Thistlethwaite, her paternal grandmother's maiden name, "a lovely running vine of a name," as she described it (Wetherald letter to Hammond, 23 February 1928).

From 1886 to 1889, Wetherald worked as the editor of the *Globe's* "Woman's World" section. John Cameron, a prominent *Globe* editor, asked Wetherald to take over his duties as editor of the "Notes and Queries" section while he went on holidays. He was so impressed with her work that a year later when he left the *Globe* to become the Managing Editor for the *London Advertiser*, in London, Ontario, he recruited Wetherald to work for him there (Garvin, "Introduction" viii). Subsequently, when Cameron founded a women's monthly magazine, *Wives and Daughters*,[9] he asked Wetherald to assist his wife in editing it (Garvin, "Introduction" viii).

During her years as an editor in London Wetherald continued writing poetry, and in 1894 she published more poems than any other poet in the *Youth's Companion* (McMullen, "Agnes" 342). When Wetherald resigned from her position at *Wives and Daughters*, many of her colleagues believed that she wanted to devote herself to poetry, and that journalism was taking up too much of her writing time; others believed she was simply homesick, and wanted to return to the family farm (MacDonald 54; Stevenson 198-99; Macklem 253). Certainly the best evidence points to an irrepressible urge toward creative writing. "Poets, like most other people," Katherine Hale writes, "are obliged to earn their living, but no stifling editorial drudgery could stay the mainspring of [Wetherald's] creative thought" (Hale, "Ethelwyn" 267-8). When she moved back to Fenwick, Wetherald left journalism behind almost entirely. Wetherald describes this period of time: "The impulse to write verse became irresistible between 1893, when I returned home, and 1896, when *The House of Trees* appeared," she said in her "Reminiscences" (xii). *The House of Trees* was Wetherald's first collection of poetry, and it received critical acclaim.[10]

Critic Margaret Coulby Whitridge writes that "[Wetherald] sustained at different times, apparently, deep-rooted affections for two major writers, both well-known men in Canada who moved to the United States to expand upon their success" (Whitridge 37). Whitridge does not name the men, which suggests that she is being discreet about former suitors or perhaps lovers, but she almost certainly alludes to Graeme Mercer Adam and E.W. Thomson, both of whom fit the description as expatriate Canadians.[11] Adam and Wetherald worked closely together on the novel, *An Algonquin Maiden: A Romance of the Early Days of Upper Canada* (1887). Such a collaborative endeavour suggests mutual respect and trust, as well as considerable time together. Wetherald and Thomson carried on a prolific and friendly correspondence,[12] and the fact that Wetherald frequently published in the periodical Thomson edited, *Youth's Companion*, in the 1890s, is evidence of a professional connection that might have had a personal foundation. There is, however, no documentary evidence that her relations with these men, or indeed any others, went beyond the literary.[13]

In 1896, Wetherald filled a short-term editorial position at *The Ladies' Home Journal* as an assistant to literary editor Francis Bellamy in Philadelphia, but she disliked having to critique and reject the young authors who submitted manuscripts. "I am grinding my heel in the neck of the aspiring authorling at the rate of fifty or sixty a day," she wrote in a letter to Campbell (10 February 1896). At the same time, she was hired to assist Forrest Morgan, editor of a series of volumes entitled *The World's Best Literature*, "for nearly a year, when the thirtieth and last volume of the series [entirely on verse] was published" (Wetherald, "Reminiscences" xvii). In fact, six of Wetherald's poems—"five or six," she nonchalantly admitted later—were included in Charles Dudley Warner's anthology for the series (Wetherald, "Reminiscences" xvii). Morgan hoped Wetherald would stay in Philadelphia, something that is a credit to the quality and volume of her editorial work for him, but again she chose to return to the family farm and to focus on her poetry. In so doing, Wetherald renounced the opportunity to become a prominent journalist and editor, choosing instead a poet's life in Canada.

Wetherald explains, "I was not homesick but there was an indefinable feeling that too much 'learned lumber in the head' must crush out whatever repressed spontaneous growth of my own was still surviving" (Wetherald, "Reminiscences" xvii). Soon after her return home, in relatively quick succession, further volumes of Wetherald's poetry were published. In 1902, Wetherald published her second collection, *Tangled in Stars*. This was followed two years later by the collection *The Radiant Road* which came out in 1904. The next year, 1905, she wrote the introduction for *The Collected Poems of Isabella Valancy Crawford*, and she consulted with John Garvin during the editing process. In 1907, she published a longer compilation of her own poems, *The Last Robin: Lyrics and Sonnets*, with many of the poems from her shorter works as well as new poems. This collection received public attention and praise, and Wetherald was establishing a name for herself in both the U.S. and Canada.

Then suddenly she put her literary ambitions in abeyance. When Wetherald "advertised for help since the housework had become too much for her [with farmhands to feed]," a young woman who was separated from her husband arrived to help out (Rungeling 68). She brought her baby girl with her. When, two years later, the woman was set to leave Fenwick, Wetherald, who was by then in her fifties, convinced the woman to leave the baby with her. Thus, she began to care for a baby named Dorothy. Wetherald took in the baby when she was six months old, and she officially adopted her in 1914 (Rungeling letter to Chambers, 20 August 1999).[14] In 1921, after a gap of several years, Wetherald published her last individual collection of poetry, and it was children's verse, entitled *Tree-Top Mornings*. The dedication leaves no doubts about Wetherald's absorption in the late-blooming relationship with her daughter. It reads as follows:

> To Dorothy.
>
> One bright morning a year ago, when I said Good-bye in a Run-along-now-as-I-am-very-busy tone of voice, you turned to me with tears exclaiming: 'When you send me off to school without one happy word it makes my feelings feel bad!' And so My Dorothy–My Little Heart–I

am inscribing all these happy words to you, in the hope that they will make your feelings feel good.

Ethelwyn Wetherald.

After Dorothy's adoption, Wetherald began to write children's verse more than other kinds of poetry, though she rarely published any of it. Although she lived reclusively in the country, and "deafness rather increased the solitude in which she lived at her country home, […] poetry lovers still found their way to her door." She kept up her correspondence with friends and readers at a distance, and she continued to "write short verse on occasion in her Christmas cards" (Bernhardt n.pag.). Ethelwyn Wetherald died at the age of 82 on March 9, 1940.

III.ii An Introduction to Helena Coleman

Helena Coleman is a little-known early writer whose life and poetry intertwines with Wetherald's. She was born in Newcastle, Ontario, on April 28, 1860, three years almost to the day after Wetherald. She had three brothers, and was the only daughter of Reverend Francis Coleman. At the age of eleven, Coleman was stricken with polio, and she walked with crutches for the rest of her life (Pomeroy, "Salute" 262).

Coleman attended the Ontario Ladies' College at Whitby, and graduated with the gold medal in music. After her graduation, she spent a year in Germany studying music. When she returned, she took up the position of the Head of the Department of Music at the Ontario Ladies' College. In 1892, in her early thirties, Coleman resigned from her position in order to devote herself more fully to her writing. She published short stories and poems in the *Atlantic Monthly*, using pseudonyms such as Helen Saxon and Winifred Cotter. In the early 1900s, Coleman joined the Tennyson Club of Toronto, where her pen names became known to a small group of women writers. This Club is credited with encouraging Coleman to get her first collection of poetry published, *Songs and Sonnets*, in 1906. *Songs and Sonnets* was successful enough to earn a second printing in 1907.

As an adult, Coleman shared a home with her brother, "the eminent geologist" Dr. A.P. Coleman (Pomeroy, "Salute" 262). She also raised another brother's daughter, Helen, with whom she developed a strong maternal bond. Coleman's literary archives show that she was an extensive traveller. She sometimes accompanied her brother A.P. in his travels, and otherwise travelled with her niece on visits to her brother Lucius on his ranch in Alberta, and her brother Albert, also the father of Helena's niece and charge, Helen, in California. Helena Coleman had many friends and acquaintances, and she took a particular interest in literary women. The Coleman family cottage on Pinehurst Island, one of the Thousand Islands near

Kingston, Ontario, became a meeting place for women writers, with Helena Coleman the hostess.

Her literary output was sparse. In 1917, Coleman published a collection of war poems entitled *Marching Men*. In 1920, a collection of her short stories *Sheila and Others* was published in the U.S. under one of her pen names, Winifred Cotter. A small chapbook of poetry, *Songs*, containing selections from her previous volumes, was published in 1937.

Later in life, by 1928, Coleman was confined to a wheelchair as a result of progressive degeneration from her childhood polio. In September 1949, Coleman's niece, Helen, died, when Coleman was 89, and she lived four more years in lingering decline (Pomeroy, "Salute" 262). She died on December 7, 1953, in her home in Toronto (Pomeroy, "Salute" 262-66).

III.iii The Relationship between Wetherald and Coleman in Letters

Ethelwyn Wetherald and Helena Coleman had a close, long-term friendship from 1906 to 1940, although they probably met some time earlier.[15] In July 1911, Wetherald spent a fortnight at Helena Coleman's family cottage on Pinehurst Island. During this particular vacation, Wetherald was one of several women, including poet Marjorie Pickthall, New Zealand author Joan Lyttleton (who wrote under the pen name G. B. Lancaster), two nieces of Coleman's, and of course Coleman herself. This visit took on special significance for Wetherald. She wrote of it at length in a private letter to editor and friend John Garvin (29 July [1911]), and again publicly in the introduction to her collected verse *Lyrics and Sonnets* in 1931.

Members of the literary community seemed to be well aware of the significance of Pinehurst Island and of Coleman to Wetherald, and it is in part due to their subtle but oft-repeated references to Coleman in articles on Wetherald that I saw the connection between them. Indeed, critics mention Coleman in almost every article on Wetherald, albeit briefly. Katherine Hale, John Garvin's wife, in her article about Wetherald's life, writes "of her close friendship with the distinguished poet, Helena Coleman, of Toronto," and she lists Coleman first among Wetherald's friends and correspondents (Hale, "Ethelwyn" 269). Because Wetherald had so many prominent literary correspondents, Hale's specific and primary mention of Coleman stands out in this context. In her article "Pinehurst Island" (1956), Elsie Pomeroy likewise describes Wetherald as "an intimate friend of Helena Coleman" (566). Pomeroy lists many of the guests to Pinehurst Island, including poet and writer Agnes Maule Machar, who appears in a photograph alongside Ethelwyn Wetherald, Marjorie Pickthall, and G.B. Lancaster. The photograph accompanying Pomeroy's article is evidence that Wetherald visited Pinehurst more than once, since in both of

Wetherald's extant accounts of the two-week vacation in 1911, Machar is never mentioned as one of those present, as she certainly would have been.

In the letter to John Garvin, Wetherald says of her time at Pinehurst Island, "It was a glorious fortnight, packed with intense pleasures—literary, social, and picturesque" (Wetherald letter to Garvin, 29 July 1911). She makes it clear that she and Helena Coleman had not seen each other in some time, and this distance would be a continuing characteristic of their friendship: "I had not seen Helena Coleman since the fall my book came out [probably 1907].[16] She upbraided me (between kisses) for never coming to see her in Toronto. She is everything that is dear and noble and has a knack of saying original, unexpected things that makes me love her more than ever" (Wetherald letter to Garvin, 29 July 1911). The time and distance of meetings between Wetherald and Coleman proves a recurrent characteristic in their relationship, as I will discuss. As well, the detail of being scolded "between kisses" shows both the love and the longing in absence between Wetherald and Coleman. It further indicates Wetherald's willingness to share intimate personal details with John Garvin.

In both the letter to Garvin and the introductory "Reminiscences of the Poet" in *Lyrics and Sonnets*, Wetherald explains the sleeping arrangements at Pinehurst:

> I had the most charming little front bedroom, with a wide open door giving on a balcony overlooking the river. On one side of me was H.C.'s room and on the other Marjorie Pickthall's, and as the partitions were thin varnished boards reaching about halfway up, we three had most delightful talks in the early morning and while dressing. M.P. is lovely in soul and body—pure undiluted genius. She is very dear to me and I can never be grateful enough for this opportunity of knowing her. (Wetherald letter to Garvin, 29 July 1911)

Wetherald's inclusion of Marjorie Pickthall[17] suggests the respect and admiration she felt toward her. The link between Pickthall and Coleman is explained by Alex Kizuk: "At the University of Toronto, [Pickthall] attracted the friendship and encouragement of the older poet Helena Coleman" (15). In a separate article, Pickthall is described as an "intimate friend" of "Helen Coleman, niece of Helena Coleman," (Relke 31).[18] The use of the term "intimate friend" by early Canadian critics appears to have been their coded way of intimating loving relationships between women. Today, Pickthall is remembered as a poet of feminine sensibility who was involved in literary circles of women writers. She left a lasting impression on Wetherald. Several times after Pickthall's early death at the age of thirty-nine,Wetherald was asked for her recollections of Marjorie Pickthall in correspondence and she always wrote about

Pickthall with admiration and affection.[19] In *Lyrics and Sonnets*, Wetherald pays tribute to her, remembering: "Marjorie Pickthall did not argue. She questioned, mused awhile, differed gently, or expressed her differing attitude by a little laugh that was as charming as it was free from self-consciousness. She was a poet to the innermost fibre of her beautiful and totally unaffected nature. Her *Three Island Songs* I am confident were written at Pinehurst" (Wetherald, "Reminiscences" xviii).

Wetherald sums up her time at Pinehurst Island by describing "the heart-to-heart talks of Pinehurst [as] the best and dearest of all. Out in the moonlight—on the rocks, or drifting with lazy oar—soul shake to soul; they can never be forgotten" (Wetherald letter to Garvin, 29 July 1911).

Besides Wetherald's lengthy letter to Garvin with regard to her time at Pinehurst Island, a few incomplete letters[20] from Wetherald to Coleman and a photograph of Dorothy Wetherald (aged five, circa 1915), Ethelwyn's daughter, have been left in Helena Coleman's literary archives.[21] There are brief mentions of Coleman in Wetherald's other extant correspondence.[22] In a letter to an unnamed male British cousin (to whom she refers only as "Dear Cousin" in correspondence)[23] Wetherald engages in self-examination, admitting, "One serious defect in my own character, which you have surely discovered by this time, is that I am almost uncontrollably honest: I'm a dreadful failure in the art of concealing my emotions and opinions" (Wetherald letter to Cousin, 26 January 1911). In the same letter, Wetherald explains the difference in her friendships with Laura Durand and Helena Coleman:

> Did you ever have the odd experience of showing one side of your nature to one friend, and another side to another? One of my friends, named Laura Durand, is a bundle of nerves, and [is] almost always in the throes of discouragement, apprehension, discontent—something poignant. She considers me in the light of a Bread Poultice. I can always soothe and comfort her. Another friend, Helena Coleman, is a singularly well-balanced woman. Fine intellect, great insight and sympathy, almost perfect self-mastery. Yet there is something inert about her. She lets her grand faculties lie dormant. She considers me her Thorn—says I pierce and prick her into doing things. Perhaps I have a special gift for finding what each individual needs and giving him that. (Wetherald letter to Cousin 26 January 1911)

After praising Coleman for her many good qualities, Wetherald makes a small criticism of her reserve. Wetherald expresses her belief that Coleman is an underachiever, and she sees her role as encouraging her friend to accomplish more. This encouragement and longing for her friend to live up to her potential suggests

Wetherald's devotion to and emotional investment in Coleman. Her criticism reflects a desire for her to seek and to be more than she already is, and shows an intimate investment that contrasts with the terms of her friendship with Durand.

"She considers me her Thorn," Wetherald says, and the nickname "Thorn" recurs in Wetherald's correspondence with Coleman. In a letter to Coleman in 1935, after some thirty years of friendship, Wetherald again addresses the "Thorn" image:

> My Dearest, don't hesitate to bring your book of sonnets out. Everyone who knows you knows that egoism is regrettably—almost criminally—absent from your make-up. […] The more I study these sonnets of yours the more the beauty of their meaning seeps through. The veriest dolt could not accuse you of conceit. I'll be your Thorn in earnest if you don't. (Wetherald letter to Coleman, 5 February 1935)

She signs this letter "All my heart to you, Thorn." The symbol of the thorn, a pricking instrument, is sexual, if only subconsciously. Although there are gaps of time where no extant correspondence exists, such continuity in nicknaming, as well as the space of years between letters suggests a continuing and long-standing devotion and intimacy. It is interesting to note that, of the extant letters from Wetherald to Coleman in the various archives, she never addresses "Helena" or signs "Ethelwyn," but rather she uses nicknames or terms of endearment. In this way, their correspondence is perhaps coded, certainly personalized, although the address and handwriting disclose the writer's identity.

There are two existing letters from Wetherald to Coleman about Coleman's manuscript for *Marching Men*. In the first letter, Wetherald addresses "Dear and Ever Dear," explaining her excitement at having received the first batch of poems:

> The precious package came safely, but I dared not open it that night for fear that some of the things that *you* call "weak and ineffective" would scratch sleep from my eyes and keep my head as Emerson says, boiling on the pillow. Then next morning I would not mix your inspirations with a lot of groveling cares so kept the treasure-box unopened with such a delicious feeling of riches in reserve and of getting my hands at last on what almost threatened to escape me altogether. (Wetherald letter to Coleman, 22 June 1917)

Wetherald's exhilaration at receiving Coleman's "precious package" of poetry, her histrionic suggestion that she might not be able to sleep should she read them before bed, and even the description of the package as a "treasure-box [...] with such a delicious feeling of riches in reserve" certainly dramatize Wetherald's welled-up anticipation and deep emotion. The vocabulary further suggests a desire for connection on Wetherald's part that is also reflected in the expression of distant love in their poetry. Because theirs was a love that happened at a distance, through shared feeling evoked in poems, the material reality of the relationship between Wetherald and Coleman became the poems themselves. The exchange of words and metaphors about love in letters and poetry became the dialogue and foundation of their love for one another, as I will further examine in discussing their poetry.

The letter continues, and Wetherald explains more practically that she is in a position to criticize Coleman's poetry because she has not seen a line of any of the poems before, and also because Coleman has been sending her "the best of recent war poetry," making her well-versed in contemporary poetry on the same themes as Coleman's. After preparing Coleman for criticism, Wetherald continues:

> And now after writing these callously judicial words I feel like plunging at you and telling you that I have read these things with quickened heart and increasing mist in the eyes. You dear blind Bat! Every one of these *takes hold*. They are imperfect, of course. I'll hunt up flaws here and there; but the truth remains that everyone who reads any one of them is enriched, ennobled, and saddened with the sadness that is nearest to our divinity. You have felt these things deeply, sincerely. They are *you*. (Wetherald letter to Coleman, 22 June 1917)

Although it is not preserved in the archives, Coleman must have responded to Wetherald's tactic of preparing her for harsh criticism only to give her nothing but praise, as a letter from Wetherald to Coleman dated a couple of weeks later responds to this idea:

> I turn with a sense of renewed pleasure to thee. [...]
>
> Dear, I did not consciously get you all prepared for the worst in order that the best might have more telling effect. As I look back it seems to me that I was in kind of a grudging fault finding mood and that if I had to do it over again I should practise less restraint in the matter of praise.
>
> You are perfectly right in saying that it is not the want of feeling that is wrong with your work but of freedom and facility. That is almost the lightest praise I have given you.
>
> Your feeling is Deep, deep as lovers' eyes
>
> Filled with napetia fiery-sweet and it flows between "narrow adamantine walls."
>
> When you consider that 999 verse writers out of 1000 are fairly mushy—gruely—with freedom and facility you should rejoice that you have escaped those pitfalls. It doesn't matter how much you fuss over

> them as long as the reader can't detect the fussiness. And besides what you call "fuss" is plain hard work. [...]
>
> But I am beginning to question whether self-consciousness is not your blessing rather than a drawback. You are an intensive poet, putting so much of yourself in your writing that your best work is nearly all H.C. It could not possibly be mistaken for the inspiration of anyone else. That is the chief reason why I know you are the Genuine Thing. [...] Your spirit, in spite of its handicaps, perhaps because of them, is thrillingly alive. My own Dear, I don't know how to tell you how these last verses affect me. I turn from one to another and back again, all the time feeling little prickly thrills travelling back and limbs and even tingling in my fingers. You woman-hearted, poet-brained wonder-worker! I did not expect much from this last budget. I thought of course you would send the best first. (Wetherald letter to Coleman, 12 July 1917)]

This letter shows Wetherald's support of, and confidence in Coleman and her poetry. The style of the letter, with the poetic interjection, "Your feeling is Deep, deep as lovers' eyes" is unlike Wetherald's correspondence to others, which tends to be business-like and brief or full of the details of everyday life. Again, there is the sexual imagery, this time female, "filled with napetia fiery-sweet and it flows between 'narrow adamantine walls''—subconscious or not.

The thrill described by Wetherald on reading Coleman's war poetry, and Wetherald's gushing praise for Coleman herself show a depth of feeling and an emotional investment that go well beyond a colleague offering composition advice to a fellow poet. There is surely love expressed by Wetherald for Coleman in these letters. The letter is addressed "Dear Admirer of Pen Pricks," mocking Coleman about the missing criticism in the previous letter, and it also plays on the role of the "Thorn" that Wetherald played in relation to Coleman, who is the recipient of the "pricks" of the thorn. Even more than Wetherald, Coleman suffers from feeling inferior as a poet, and yet these two writers persevered in their writing, adding to the cultural landscape of early twentieth-century Canada, not only in terms of love poetry, but in terms of war poetry in Coleman's case, and nature poetry as well.

Wetherald's letters, her "Reminiscences of the Poet," and articles about Pinehurst Island are the tangible evidence of the relationship between Ethelwyn Wetherald and Helena Coleman. The letters, as texts, cloak Wetherald's private expressions of love in terms of playfulness and literary encouragement toward Coleman. The poems show a heightened dialogue on love, and a reluctant but resigned acceptance of love at a distance, and, alongside the letters, are evidence of the love that Wetherald and Coleman shared. They suggest the significance and the material importance of the poetry in the relationship.

III.iv A Dialogue of Love in Poems

Formally, Wetherald wrote traditional lyrics and sonnets whether she was writing nature poems or love poems. Her love poems show a progression: earlier poems consider heterosexual love (e.g., "Unspoken"), while the later ones use gender-neutral subjects (e.g., "Enchantment") or express love for Helena Coleman (e.g., "To H.C."). Still other poems dispel the myth that single women were lonely or unwanted, and show the single life as a positive choice (e.g., "Two," "Marriage Vows").[24] As Karen Dubinsky explains, the cultural climate of turn-of-the-century Canada in terms of women, family, and love required a certain kind of morality:

> Historians have tended to interpret the turn-of-the-century social purity movement as an Anglo-Saxon, middle-class response to increasing fears about immigration, the growth of the working class, and changes in social and family life brought on by industrialization and urbanization. Yet as other commentators have recently argued, moral regulation also involved the creation of a particular kind of citizen. The emerging state in nineteenth-century Canada was concerned not just with the formation of political and economic 'subjectivities,' but

> also with "the formation of a moral subjectivity that would not only be congruent with but also would provide the psychological basis for what was known as nation-building." Nations required factories, workers, and transportations systems, but they also required citizens, subjects with 'character.' (33)

This idea of Canada as a country with citizens of "character" included a heterosexual norm, took it for granted even, and women were expected to conform to their wifely and maternal roles. In her life, to all appearances, Wetherald conformed to the idea of the morality of the Canadian woman. She kept her relationship with Coleman at arm's length, and she took on the maternal duty by adopting and raising Dorothy. In her poetry, however, she managed to express both the compliance with conformity out of a love of God and also the strains of conformity. Later poems especially show unsettled viewpoints on different types of love and the single life. Yet critics have not taken up the matter of the progression of love in Wetherald's poems.

Specific love poems by Ethelwyn Wetherald and Helena Coleman express a dialogic sequence that has so far been overlooked. As I have suggested, Wetherald's and Coleman's letters and some of their poems can be read as an intimate dialogue on or an affirmation of their love for one another. I begin with Coleman's sonnet "When

Thou Art Distant" because it was published first, in her collection *Songs and Sonnets* in 1906. In it, she describes how distance intensifies reflection on the absent love:

WHEN THOU ART DISTANT

When thou art distant, then art thou most near,
    For though in thy dear presence I am fain
    With my great joy forever to remain,
Yet when thou art no longer with me here,
The sum of thee, like music fine and clear,
    Steals in upon my being till I gain
    So close a sense of thee that I attain
A new relationship divinely dear.

'Tis in the silent hour we most discern
    The face of our beloved, and realize
The deeps of our own heart; 'tis when we yearn
    With unspent passion that the spirit-eyes
Unclose to Heavenly vision, and we learn
Those narrow ways that lead to Paradise.

Coleman explores the idea that withdrawal, absence, or separation in love stimulate a yearning that forces a realization about "the deeps of our own heart" and its "unspent passion." It is in longing for her loved one that the "narrow ways that lead to Paradise" are disclosed. Whether Coleman specifically meant to suggest the need for her and Wetherald to maintain their love at a distance because of the social constraints of the time cannot be proven. However, one way to read the end of the poem as celebratory is to consider that the dutiful distance of lovers (and its necessary chastity) will reap rewards for them in the afterlife. While this is the most likely reading, another possible interpretation is to consider the ending not as celebratory but rather as critical of the "narrow ways that lead to Paradise," as an imposition on the lovers in order to secure their place in heaven. In this reading of the poem, Coleman is being not only paradoxical, but also defiant in affirming that distance only makes her lover feel closer to her, because no matter what the social conditions demand, her passion increases. Coleman's theme about celebrating the purity and vastness of loving at a distance was echoed by Wetherald.

Wetherald's poem "Good-Bye" was first published in her collection *The Last Robin* in 1907. It is in some ways a more emotional variation on Coleman's theme of passion between separated lovers. It is interesting to note that in the collection *Lyrics and Sonnets* (1931), John Garvin arranged the sonnets so that the similarly-themed "Good-Bye" directly precedes "To H.C.", the sonnet to Helena Coleman:

GOOD-BYE

Good-bye, my love! Though multitudes of years
And miles and faces come between us twain,
Though I should never hear your voice again,
Still are you mine, still mine! Not by my tears—
You never made them flow—nor by my fears,
For I was fearless born; but by the rain
Of joys that turned to seas of sunny grain
This heart that showed aforetime slender spears.

Now on my clouded day of life shall come
No loss. The streams of gold that poured from suns
Unseen have turned to gold this harvest heart;
I am all sunlight-coloured, and the sum
Of by-gone happiness that through me runs
Will make you mine forever, though apart.

The theme of love and separation from the beloved is brought into the poem from its title and opening line, "Good-bye, my love," followed immediately by the mid-line caesura, so that the break in the line imitates the separation of lovers. The speaker then imagines what may happen over time and distance, bereft of the connection of touch, sight, and sound of the beloved, yet still the speaker affirms their togetherness. The certainty of the continuing connection with the departed lover shows conviction, and the repetition shows defiance—"still are you mine, still mine!" The love is nourished in the absence of the lover's physical presence by the recollection of an encounter in the past, using an image of cultivation or growth through a "rain of joys" that brings the heart's formerly "slender spear" to a fecund maturity (6-8). The imagery may allude to a sexual encounter of some kind, a sexual relationship that was surprisingly and discreetly "unseen" (ll. 11), perhaps a sexual climax, powerful enough and sustaining enough that the "by-gone happiness" binds the lovers to one another forever, regardless of distance.

The sestet develops the rain imagery, only this time it is sorrowful, and it refers to the ending, to the passage of time, or to what must remain masked in the relationship. Still, the speaker affirms that there is "no loss" (ll. 10). The separation between lover and beloved is inevitable at the poem's end, and the lovers rely on "by-gone happiness" to sustain them.

As "Good-bye" was published in Wetherald's collection *The Last Robin* the year after Coleman's *Songs and Sonnets* was published, it is not unreasonable to suppose that it was Wetherald's public poetic response to "When thou art distant then art thou most near." The imagery of rain in "Good-bye" both as nurturing and sorrowful shows the tension in striving for equanimity in terms of separation and love. In other words, the speaker of "Good-bye" regrets the idea that she must love at a distance even while she affirms the depth of connection.

This poem is similar in theme to John Donne's "A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning," yet love poems affirming the intensity of separation or absence to provoke or sustain love are surprisingly rare. Wetherald's and Coleman's variations on these themes are compelling. For one thing, they agree that separation is integral to the relationship between lover and beloved. There is both a temporal and a physical distance in the imagery of "Good-bye," as it takes time for the "rain of joy" to reap its harvest, and it is from "suns / Unseen" (ll. 10-11) that the harvest occurred.

While a love poem like Donne's laments the imminent separation of lovers and their inability to physically be together, in "Good-bye," the ideas of temporal and physical separation are set up as enhancements for the perpetuation of love, and so they are celebrated. From its title, the poem is about parting, and yet the speaker is always confident about her connection with the beloved because she has 'blossomed' through knowing her. There is an optimism in the poem in terms of having ventured and gained through the speaker's relationship with the lover even though separation is required rather than chosen.

Wetherald's poem "To H.C." was published in *Lyrics and Sonnets* in 1931. It offers compelling evidence that Ethelwyn Wetherald loved Helena Coleman, and it also offers an explanation for their affirmed separation from each other:

TO H.C.

Dear, I would be your friend, but not as those
Whose eager breaths and hands are hot out-thrown;
When you are far then are you most my own.
I am as one who in the dawnlight goes
Down dewy paths and finds the perfect rose
And leaves it in the stillness all alone,
God being with it. From its heart half blown
His deepest and divinest thoughts unclose.

Something from air and sky, from rain and sod
You send across the hedge of reverence
To me who see you only but to bless.
Ah, when I leave you all alone with God
It is as if my heart and soul and sense

The more enclosed your spirit's loveliness!

"To H.C." suggests that the relationship between Wetherald and Coleman, or their feelings for one another, may have been complicated by their religious beliefs. Wetherald was raised as a Quaker, and Coleman was the daughter of a minister. Both women are mindful of religion and of what they present as the pure and higher love of God in their love poems to one another. The "H.C." of the title is unidentified, and readers might assume that Wetherald is addressing a man in her poem. Yet, there is little doubt that "To H.C." refers to Helena Coleman. In Wetherald's letter of July 29 1911, she refers to Marjorie Pickthall as "M.P." and to Helena Coleman as "H.C." as the letter progresses. In Wetherald's letter to Coleman in 1917, she writes, "your best work is nearly all H.C." (Wetherald letter to Coleman, 12 July 1917). Furthermore, in Helena Coleman's correspondence, she often signed letters "Yours, H.C." The "Dear," in the opening line is also gender-neutral and there is an eroticism in its opening lines, "hands [...] hot out-thrown." In qualifying that her friendship with H.C. cannot be physical, like other people's love, the speaker implies that her feelings for H.C. are superior, on a higher plane than the banal, physical level. It suggests that their love is purer because they maintain it on a platonic or intellectual level of commitment that supercedes physical love.

The third line of the poem, "When you are far then are you most my own," expresses how separation emphasizes the depth of their love, and it is almost a paraphrase of the opening line from Coleman's poem, "When thou art distant, then art thou most near." The speaker in "To H.C." seeks isolated moments in which to discover love and friendship: "dewy paths" at "dawnlight" (5, 4) suggest a private or personal moment, perhaps even an inspirational moment where she finds "the perfect rose / And leaves it in the stillness all alone, / God being with it" (5-7). It is in leaving H.C., symbolically the rose in the poem, that the speaker then receives "deepest and divinest" (8) of spiritual thoughts. This image echoes the description of an intimate moment shared with Coleman that Wetherald includes in her "Reminiscences of the Poet," published in the introduction to *Lyrics and Sonnets*. Wetherald concludes her "Reminiscences" with a memory of Helena Coleman from Pinehurst Island:

> I remember in particular the Sunday morning when the cook wished to go to church. Miss Coleman and I rowed her across to Gananoque and while she went to her place of worship, we waited outside in the boat and talked of churches and creeds, of Christianity and the meaning of existence, of things that remind us we are infinite. The best of herself

> is what Helena Coleman gives in her talk as in her written prose and poetry. (Wetherald, "Reminiscences" xviii)

By ending her "Reminiscences" with this memory of Coleman, Wetherald both reinforces the importance of this relationship to her, and shows the intellectual connection and religious understanding between them.

The octave of "To H.C." concludes with the invocation of God and the divine in a verse about distance and love, and this invocation suggests that the beloved, the rose, while "all alone," still has God with her. It is reminiscent of the conversation "of things that remind us we are infinite." By keeping her love of H.C. at a distance, the speaker respects her love of God, and, it is as if in the absence of her physical presence her love of H.C. becomes purer and more profound. The sestet develops this line of thought further, beginning with the ineffable sense of "Something […] / You send across the hedge of reverence" (9-10), that the speaker receives from H.C. across the distance that separates them.

In keeping their love at a distance, Wetherald and Coleman literally sustain their connection through letters and poems. The poem ends with the speaker leaving H.C., and thereby developing a greater understanding of her. The "spirit" of H.C. is internalized emotionally, religiously, and physically by the speaker through withdrawal. Critically, the notion of withdrawing in order to better "see" H.C.'s spirit, and to make expansive what has been closed off to the speaker makes this love poem thought-provoking about the necessity of distance to fully appreciate a loved one. Without the freedom to love openly and publicly, Wetherald celebrates the virtues and possibilities of loving at a safe, socially acceptable distance. Given the identity of H.C. and the relationship between Coleman and Wetherald, the poem becomes an affirmation that Wetherald and Coleman chose to live by a specific moral code. The poem "To H.C." is less effusive than "Good-bye," perhaps because by the time Wetherald wrote "To H.C.", she and Coleman had long been living and loving at a distance.

In Coleman's *Songs and Sonnets* (1906), further connections to Wetherald's poetry can be found. Coleman's poem "Love's Higher Way"[25] examines the humbling effects of exercising restraint in the expression of loving someone, and the parallel love of God that accompanies it. The poem begins strongly, "Constrain me not!" and asks that the beloved understand that the speaker hides her face to "hide the overflow/ Of love" (3-4). Immediately, the speaker requires "space" and "solitude" to thank God for allowing her such overwhelming feeling. The speaker is always mindful of her devotion to God as well. Love "rolls the stone / From buried selves, and makes us part / Of all that was and is to be" (24-26). In loving freely, and without constraint, mindful of God's presence and blessing, the speaker hopes to be led "past self into the wide, / Still reaches of eternal day" (38-39). Threatened by her strong feelings of love, the speaker is consoled by her love for God. Like Wetherald, Coleman expresses a mindfulness about God, divinity, and eternal life as she considers the overwhelming feeling of love.

In *Songs and Sonnets*, Coleman's love poems are usually gender-neutral; that is, the speaker addresses "thee" or "thou." The poem "Exiled" is probably about Pinehurst Island. It is possible and quite likely that Pinehurst Island, as a literary women's retreat, was a kind of sanctuary where women's love for one another was accepted and acceptable. In this way, it would have been considered an "exile" from heteronormative society and the limitations of social purity. In three stanzas, the speaker expresses longing to return to "the old home place" in summer. Places of exile are not usually places where one longs to be, unless of course they are somehow freer than normal society. The final stanza uses suggestive vocabulary: "How my wanton pulse thrills," the poet says to describe how she feels when she nostalgically reflects on the place. The language used to end the poem describes the anticipation and the tingling of the senses the speaker feels in remembering and in looking forward to revisiting the "exile."

Distance and friendship come up again in "At Parting," when Wetherald writes, "My soul goes after thee / [...] My life with thine grows strong or fails or dies" (1;14). The poem "In A Dark Hour" asserts, "The memory of days too sweet to last / Shall make my heart run o'er with joy again" (13-14). "Absence," an excerpt of which is used as the epigraph to this chapter, uses floral imagery to suggest its transformative power: "Beneath thy touch the brown and yellow leaf / Turns to pink blossom, and the spring-bright boughs / Frame lovers running to each other's arms" (12-14). Although the speaker is wilting and wasting away from absence, Wetherald says, she is seasonally renewed and reborn through connection with the beloved. The metaphor of the leaf turning from brown to pink at the lover's touch is an example of inversion, made wonderfully sensuous because it turns the colour of living flesh rather than the green of leaves. Wetherald's nature metaphors are always warmly sensual, and sometimes subtly sexual, perhaps showing Wetherald's way of naturalizing what she could not or would not state explicitly in her poetry. Nature imagery is both conventional and familiar to readers, but it also provides metaphors for discussing all kinds of topics, including unconventional love.

In *Songs and Sonnets*, Coleman's sonnets entitled "At Parting" and "Absence" also speak of distance, love, and hope in memory. "At Parting" begins, "Keep thou amidst the fulness of thy days / Some little space apart for thoughts of me." "Absence" is about how the speaker takes solace when her lover is distant and her day is "grieving." In both Coleman's and Wetherald's love poems, distance in love makes loving safe, even possible. Both poets extol distance to achieve the purest, most profound type of love.

In their thematically similar love sonnets, Wetherald and Coleman created a dialogue that they alone, with perhaps a few other intimate friends, were fully aware of. In it, they affirmed the necessity for distance in their love, and quietly asserted their feelings for each other—perhaps as reassurance or affirmation to one another, always under the guise of acceptable "female friendship" as I will discuss—but certainly there for others to see if they were attentive readers.

III.v The Critical Bind: Poetic Criticism and Sexuality

In general, early Canadian love poetry has not received the critical attention nature poetry received. I speculate that this is in part because of its reputation for being sentimental and old-fashioned, and also because of its focus on individuals and lyrical verse rather than being linked with national character and landscape. In his work, *Nationalism and Sexuality*, George L. Mosse suggests that "nationalism support[s] respectability, and [...] religion also fulfill[s] that function" (183). It is clear that Wetherald's and Coleman's love poetry is written within the boundaries of respectability. "The very strength of respectability and nationalism," Mosse writes, "their appeal, and the needs they filled, meant that those who stood apart from the norms of society were totally condemned. It was no longer the specific sexual acts alone that were considered abnormal, but the entire physical and mental structure of the person practising these acts" (186). By examining the literary criticism on Wetherald's love poetry along with some historical and sociological studies of sexuality, I want to suggest that there is a connection between early Canadian social discourse and literary criticism that has affected not only what has been remembered in literature, but also how it has been read.

While Wetherald's love poems did receive some notice from critics, they were overshadowed by her thematically more conventional nature poems. Critics knew that Wetherald was a single woman, an adoptive mother, and a popular journalist. Her nature poetry perhaps provided critics with a prudent alternative to discussing her love poetry, though her love poetry could hardly be ignored altogether. In Canada, "[t]he ruling attitude of the time," writes W.H. New,

> espoused a particular moral cause, rigid in its interpretation of the factuality of historical models, absorbed in an idea of the universe as a clockwork unity, suspicious of art, and bombastic in judgment. [...] The most immediate result of this critical context was the enshrinement of a set of conventions about nature. The world of nature represented a moral crucible in which to test manliness, strength, courage, heroic resources. (111-12)

That attitude virtually prohibited the cultural production of non-heterosexual, non-family-oriented literary texts; in the case of Wetherald's love poetry, I suggest that it deflected attention from her love poems. The perception of Wetherald as the "poet in the trees," in part cultivated by her through the titles of her poetry collections, gave her a safe pastoral literary image, and undoubtedly provided protective coloration for her non-traditional love poems. In this section, I will be focusing on what critics did write about Wetherald's love poetry, but it is worth noting that for every sentence written about her love poetry, there were dozens of sentences written about her nature poetry.

In the past thirty years, several studies of female friendship in the nineteenth century have theorized the homosexual and lesbian preferences of writers and the discourse they produce in literature. Lillian Faderman's extensive study, *Surpassing the Love of Men: Romantic Friendship and Love Between Women from the Renaissance to the Present* (1981) categorizes the historical progression of love between women, and the subsequent social reaction to it in the nineteenth century. Faderman's study provides context for the ways in which Wetherald's relationship with Coleman might have been viewed. It defines one of the historical categories for women's relationships with women: "Kindred spirits [are] deeply felt friendships between women [which] were casually accepted in American society [of the nineteenth century], primarily because women saw themselves, and were seen as kindred spirits who inhabited a world of interests and sensibilities alien to men" (160). Because Wetherald and Coleman were both single, well-educated, religious, literary women, they readily fit into the category of "kindred spirits." Faderman attributes the societal tolerance for "kindred spirits" to necessity, because men and women were estranged from one another as each occupied its separate sphere. Faderman's categories are useful as defining labels in the progression and development of loving relationships between women.

Adrienne Rich argues for an expansion of the meanings of "lesbian," "female friendship," and the "lesbian continuum," in her article, "Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence" (1980). Rich suggests that women should consider various psychological connections as well as bodily pleasures as erotic, potent, and lesbian. She explains that the idea of female friendship is another way of covering up the history of lesbianism, by denying its existence, and presenting women's relationships as unthreatening, thereby undermining their importance. She describes how historical studies of women's sexuality have failed to notice the discontinuous, purposely overlooked history of lesbian existence, and how, in romanticizing the existence of classic lesbian relationships as renegade, subversive, and powerful, they are denied their actual, veiled and troubled history. Because the history of lesbianism is for the most part unrecorded or missing, Rich observes that each writer experiencing it and writing about it must have felt like a pioneer. There is both a profound loneliness to living a marginalized lifestyle, and a desire to write about it for others who might feel the same way. Rich sees the missing history of lesbianism as a serious gap, and a means for keeping heterosexuality "compulsory" and for ensuring patriarchal domination over women's sexuality.

The article "Ethelwyn Wetherald's Poetry: An Appreciation," published in the literary periodical *The Canadian Bookman*, was written by John Garvin to promote his edition of Wetherald's collected verse *Lyrics and Sonnets* (1931). In it, Garvin mentions Wetherald's love poetry, and even quotes some lines from her love poems, but he does not give the titles of the poems he quotes.[26] He writes, "Miss Wetherald's love songs are replete with restrained passion, but as to their message a number are quite unusual in modern verse. They give emphasis to the danger of too close an intimacy" (200). As we have seen above, many of Wetherald's love poems extol love's endurance despite distance and difficulty. In characterizing her love poems as "quite unusual," Garvin might be alluding to the possibility of same-sex love without naming it, and his reading of their expression of "danger" involved in intimacy shows what became, according to Korinek, one paradigm within which to read potentially homosexual literature: the suggestion that "homosexual individuals were sexually immature, easily influenced, and [in some criticism] in need of psychiatric assessment and treatment" (Korinek 86). Of course, Garvin's comment is much more mild-mannered, or perhaps just more covert, if "unusual" can be construed as aberrant, if only mildly. Garvin knew about Wetherald's relation with her "intimate friend" Coleman, and apparently had no scruples about it. Yet his phrasing indicates the careful way poems written by women about love were received. At the same time, Garvin provides the conservative reader and potential buyer an easy selling point by noting that Wetherald's love poems are unique, and by emphasizing their social acceptability because of the trepidation about intimacy which they so eloquently express. Garvin ignores the potency of Wetherald's love poems, the sensuous imagery and strong feelings, and focuses on a perceived innocence in them. Because of Garvin's investment in marketing Wetherald's collected poetry, he promoted the collection within the acceptable social framework of the time, primarily by focussing on her nature poetry, while making her love poetry seem innocent enough.

Michel Foucault's *The History of Sexuality* characterizes the nineteenth century as a time when virtually all sexual conduct and certainly anything considered "deviant" was unmentionable, except in certain areas of the underworld:

> If it was truly necessary to make room for illegitimate sexualities, it was reasoned, let them take their infernal mischief elsewhere: to a

> place where they could be reintegrated, if not in the circuits of production, at least in those of profit. The brothel and the mental hospital would be those places of tolerance: the prostitute, the client, and the pimp, together with the psychiatrist and his hysteric—those "other Victorians," as Steven Marcus would say—seem to have surreptitiously transferred the pleasures that are unspoken into the order of things that are counted. [...] Everywhere else, modern puritanism imposed its triple edicto of taboo, nonexistence, and silence. (Foucault 4-5)

By institutionalizing "illegitimate sexuality" and labelling behaviours as deviant, marginalized or illegitimate, the state authorizes compliance with a puritanical, "respectable" sexual norm, meaning reproductive sexuality. Foucault further sees the fostering of repression as "the fundamental link between power, knowledge, and sexuality" (6). By repressing people's sexual curiosity, the society maintains limits on the range of permissible activities by denying them knowledge of 'other' sexual possibilities. In this view, Wetherald's and Coleman's agreement to maintain their love for each other at a safe distance, enacted (so to speak) through poetry and letters was a kind of pact by which they repressed physical love in favour of spiritual or romantic love. Still, through poetry, Wetherald and Coleman create material evidence of their love, and because it was literary rather than physical, they could maintain it without the risk of judgement.

In England, from 1885 until 1967, homosexuality was a criminal offense, and Canada followed suit (Westman 39). Furthermore, in the early twentieth century, the time when the relationship between Wetherald and Coleman can best be evidenced, critics suggest that "the cultural climate of war precluded tolerating sexual acts which might [have been] privately acceptable during peace-time" (Westman 39). Jeffrey Weeks' historical study of sexuality, *Sex, Politics, and Society: The Regulation of Sexuality since 1800* (1981) shows that in England, "as late as 1871, concepts of homosexuality were extremely underdeveloped both in the Metropolitan Police and in high medical and legal circles, suggesting the absence of any clear notion of a homosexual category or of any social awareness of what a homosexual identity might consist of" (Weeks 101). Weeks finds a deep-seated denial and prejudice rooted in ignorance about homosexuality in general in the nineteenth century. In his exploratory work on lesbians specifically, Weeks notes that the historical record is practically vacant of classifiable information:

> In 1901 Krafft-Ebing noted that there were only fifty known cases of lesbianism, and even in the early 1970s, two modern writers on homosexuality could note that the "scientific literature on the lesbian is

> exceedingly sparse." Writers like Magnus Hirschfield and Havelock Ellis whose scientific and polemical interest in the subject was genuine seem to have found it difficult to discover much information, or many lesbians whose case histories they could record. (Weeks 115)

Lillian Faderman argues that women could easily disguise their sexual difference because people relied on stereotypical views. That is, "sex was considered an activity in which virtuous women were not interested and did not indulge unless to gratify their husbands and to procreate, [and] it was generally inconceivable to society that an otherwise respectable woman could choose to participate in a sexual activity that had as its goal neither procreation nor pleasing a husband" (Faderman 152). As such, women's friendships and bonds with one another were often unquestionably viewed as platonic whether they were so or not. Weeks' study suggests that "what matters is not the inherent nature of the act but the social construction of meanings around that activity, and the individual response to that" (117). The cultural and social ideas about sexuality at any given period affect both the representation of homosexuality in literature and the critical reception of works deemed homosexual in subject matter. Weeks' idea of the missing history of lesbianism and its cultural significance emphasizes the denial and repression of sexual difference. Thus, sexuality is a question of ideology, and so Wetherald's and Coleman's veiled way of expressing their love for each other in poems and letters, and of keeping their love at a distance becomes more clear. It also helps to explain why critics would speak guardedly, if at all, about Wetherald's love poetry. To write in any other way, either for Wetherald and Coleman, or for critics, would be radical, revolutionary, and unpublishable except in the 'gutter press.' The consequences to their reputations, their livelihood, their careers might be disastrous, something that neither of them wanted nor was willing to risk.

When Elizabeth Roberts MacDonald briefly mentions Wetherald's love poetry in an article published in *The Canadian Magazine* in 1919, she focuses on Wetherald's expressions of the initial, innocent stages of love:

> Ethelwyn Wetherald's love poems have a distinctive and delicate charm. Many, perhaps most, of them, deal with love in its beginning—an elusive, Ariel-like love, a sprite half-fearing lest it become a mortal, or at least involved and tangled in mortal pettiness. Her loves wander in dream-paths and the wandering allures them rather than any goal, however fair. [...] [Many poems] deal with young love, with emotions half-distrustful of their own strength. In her sonnets, however, a deeper note is struck. The distrust of life has been cast aside, and love has proved itself not a fragile bloom, losing

> its beauty and mystery at the first breath of storm, but a thing stronger than the storm itself, more wonderful, more enduring, than its first dear promise hinted. (MacDonald 52)

MacDonald reads fear in Wetherald's love poetry because of what she perceives as naïveté in love. However, the danger or "distrust" may well be indicative of the fear of revealing too much within the covert codings of traditional poetry. MacDonald's reading of Wetherald's love poetry keeps it either in the realm of the imagined and thus innocent, or in the realm of love's divine grandeur, and thereby avoids reading any specific sexuality in it. Her reading, in other words, seems consistent with the "conservative, imperialist" readers one imagines for *The Canadian Magazine*.

Some critics who wrote about Wetherald's poetry avoided discussing the love poems altogether. John Macklem, who published an article on Wetherald in the literary magazine *The Canadian Bookman* in 1929, discusses her nature poetry, briefly mentions her prose and her life, but avoids her love poems altogether. O.J. Stevenson, who published a chapter on Wetherald in his 1927 book *A People's Best*, discusses her poetry generally, but cites only her nature lyrics, and then goes on to discuss her style more generally. Stevenson's main paragraph about her poetry does not categorize it in terms of her themes, but rather speaks more generally about her ability:

> The charm of "The House of Trees," as of all Miss Wetherald's verse, lies in the felicity of phrasing, the ability to translate the moods, especially the gray moods of everyday life, into language that expresses the finer shades of the poet's feeling; and it is because her poems have to do with the simple things in nature and common experiences in daily life that they have proved to be a "balm for pain."[27] (Stevenson 196)

Stevenson rightly praises Wetherald's ability to capture moods, and her sensitivity to, and understanding of the human condition. Read outside of the context of her relationship with Coleman, Wetherald's love poetry is adept at capturing the poignancy and pain of needing to keep love at arm's length, and of the paradoxical sorrow and hope that goes along with loving somebody.

Terry Castle's work, *The Apparitional Lesbian: Female Homosexuality and Modern Culture* (1993) examines the figure of the covert lesbian and her representations in literature. Like Rich (1980) before her, Castle suggests that having so many models of lesbian existence continues to allow for a shadowed, overlooked, encrypted history of lesbianism. She argues, "The lesbian is never with us, it seems, but always somewhere else: in the shadows, in the margins, hidden from history, out of sight, out of mind, a wanderer in the dusky, a lost soul, a tragic mistake, a pale denizen of the night" (2). She outlines the history of "the apparitional lesbian" throughout literature, revealing the indistinct presence of lesbians, erotic love and attraction between women. Lesbian love is rarely explicit, and Castle sees patriarchal society repressing it based on the perceived threat of women loving women, women procreating scientifically, and the ultimate rejection of men altogether.

Such a shadowy history apparently suited the quiet sensibility of Wetherald, among other writers of the early twentieth century, who could write about their own experiences through traditional poetic genres and still maintain their reputations and status as poets and writers. In the context of the historical "undercurrent" of the lesbian discussed by Castle and Rich, Wetherald's love poetry seems to have been an acceptable way of writing outside the heterosexual norm without appearing to do so. The poetic resonance of absence in the love sonnets of Coleman and Wetherald guarantees that their love for each other will not realize itself in unseemly lesbianism but will allow them to sustain their love at the level of (in Faderman's terms) kindred spirits or (in John Garvin's terms) intimate friends. It would allow Wetherald to "find the perfect rose and leave it in the stillness all alone."

Even later critics continued to read Wetherald's poetry within the critical framework established by early commentators. Margaret Coulby Whitridge, in her estimation of Wetherald's poetry from 1978, writes: "she began publishing haunting nature poems and love poems that imprinted themselves on the memory, by their undercurrents, more than by their conventional rhymes. A poem about birds and trees would suddenly soar into the universal tragedy inherent in personal experience" (Whitridge 37-8). Whitridge's idea that Wetherald's poetry contains "undercurrents" is similar to Elizabeth Roberts MacDonald's view that Wetherald's poems have "a haunting quality, distinctive, individual" (53), and like Garvin's reading of "restrained passion." What these critics have in common, on reading Wetherald's representations of love, is an impression of the complexity of emotion expressed in her work. The idea of "undercurrents" in Wetherald's poetry calls to mind Terry Castle's "apparitional lesbian" and the notion that some of Wetherald's love poems offered an alternative viewpoint from the accepted public discourse of sexuality. Critics not only suppressed women's writing by the kind of critical commentary they made, but also by what they ignored. The subtleties in Wetherald's love poetry, her attempts to naturalize love between women by using images of nature to express it, are rendered inexpressible by the critics who, similarly restricted by the social codes of the day, maintained that the love expressed in them represented naïveté or innocence.

Through poetry, the public expression of love was a way for women to write themselves into the shadows, and out of compulsory heterosexuality. By using conventional genres and styles, they could maintain respectability. The reception of Wetherald's love poems, texts that went against the grain and more specifically that dared to imagine outside or beyond the confines of women's traditional sexual roles, remained in the private domain, or at least semi-private, as they were not publicly examined or given critical credence. The love poems and letters between Wetherald and Coleman show the limited and careful conditions allowed for the expression of love between women at the turn of the century in Canada, and they remind us of the broader scope we ought to have when reading early poetry and considering its cultural landscape.

III.vi Wetherald's Later Love Poetry

This discussion has focused on Wetherald's relationship with Coleman through love poems and letters; on the kind of critical attention Wetherald's love poetry received; and on the framework of social discourse that influenced how writers and critics engaged with the subject of women's love at the turn of the twentieth century. By exploring some of Wetherald's later poems, I examine the progression of her depictions of love. These late poems mark a change in emphasis from celebrating loving at a distance to marking its inherent loneliness and honouring the single life. These poems speak of the solitude in which Wetherald chose to live her life, and of the price of keeping love at arm's length.

A series of poems from the "Lyrics of Life and Wisdom" section of *Lyrics and Sonnets* explore these themes. In "The Lonely Lake," Wetherald uses metaphors from nature to define the moods and attitudes of everyday life. It ends with the stanza,

> But a lonely lake and a lonely shore
>   Speak to the loneliness in my heart,
> And a vehement kinship evermore
>   Binds us together though apart. (11-14)

As in her early love poems, Wetherald's speaker reiterates that a "vehement kinship" holds the lovers together even though they are separated, but she cannot deny the "loneliness in my heart" that she sees reflected in her natural surroundings.

Yet Wetherald is no pessimist. She also celebrates solitude and independence in many of her poems, proclaiming her unmarried status as a choice and not an accident or burden. The poem "Alone" expresses Wetherald's bewilderment at people's judgement of the single life, and of their fear of being alone in an ironic little aphorism:

> The man I cannot comprehend
> Is he who dreads alone to be,
> Who, if he cannot have a friend,
> Would welcome e'en an enemy. (1-4)

In the poem "Two," which appears in the "Love Songs" section of *Lyrics and Sonnets*, the speaker is caught between the conflicting duality of "the man that loved me" and "another one" (3-4). The ungendered "other one" is revealed as "the one that I love" (12), and as the speaker compares the man who loves her with the unnoticed, or "viewless" (16) one whom she loves, the latter emerges as the more compelling lover. In the end, the man's words leave the speaker "in anger" (21). In the aftermath of the poem, the speaker describes outside judgement: "And men say now I am lonely—they see not / the one that I love" (23-24). It is easy to read Castle's lesbian apparition in "the viewless [...] one that I loved" in this poem. Readers coming to this poem with no awareness of Wetherald's relationship with Coleman would surely infer that the "other one" is a man. It is much less meaningful on that reading, and rather vague. Such a poem, in its ambiguity, exemplifies the way a woman's unconventional choices become invisible or naturalized into simple or uncontested conventional ideas. People assume first that the speaker will return the love of the man who loves her if for no other reason than because she is alone. They further assume that the speaker must be lonely because she naïvely spurns the "one who loved me." Meanwhile, they are unable to see the speaker's love for the shadowy "other one." Wetherald's expression of love for the unspecified "other one" creates dramatic irony between the poet and the reader. Without identifying "the other one" as female in this poem, Wetherald manages to express her feelings while disguising them for readers who would be unable to override stereotypical views of single womanhood, and those who would be unable to identify homosexual love because it resided outside the dominant sexual ideology of the time.

In "Marriage Vows," Wetherald writes about choosing to live a single life. The poem begins with the paradox, "God hath wed me to myself." She imagines the higher power is responsible for the single life she has chosen. There are some temporal shifts from the past to the future in this poem, as the speaker must be responsible to the person she was, and is, and will become. The second stanza describes "the masterful brave spouse" who will "make the weaker vessel strong" both by observing her marriage vows, and by belonging to her "Higher Self." In marrying herself, the speaker both shows the predominant way of considering and consolidating relationships and inverts the notion of heterosexual marriage. In the third and fourth stanzas, Wetherald's speaker discusses rather cynically the things that she will *not* have to endure—the compromises or the downfalls of being in a relationship with another. Being "wed to" herself (1), the speaker need not compromise her physicality, "the supple liveness of her frame" (10), her mental capacities "the path of the creative flame" (12), or her spiritual growth: "She shall not din within mine ears / The tale of old mistake and woe" (13-14). In the final stanza, the speaker comes to an androgynous unity, as the masculine and feminine parts of herself join: "She shall observe her marriage vows, / And unto me, her lord, belong"

(19-20). On the one hand, "Marriage Vows" challenges the traditional idea of marriage by redefining it within a single life and by finding within herself both "lord" and lady. Like "Two," "Marriage Vows" challenges the stereotype that unmarried women, 'spinsters' in the jargon of the day, had no choice in the matter, or that they could not ultimately live satisfactory lives. This poem describes the internal landscape of loneliness and fierce independence, hallmarks of Wetherald's poetry at its best.

Being aware of a heterosexist bias in interpretations and criticism of early Canadian women's poetry and considering the possibility of a broader range of readings allow new perspectives to emerge. Wetherald's love poems written on the imperative of distance to achieve the purest love leave a significant legacy of her relationship with Coleman. Wetherald and Coleman contained their imaginings in traditional verse forms, abiding by the literary discourse of the day while pushing the boundaries of public social discourse to include subtle, unconventional themes that went beyond patriarchal, heterosexual norms. The "apparitional lesbian" is evident in their love poems.

Wetherald's reclusiveness, her decision to isolate herself in her tree house, may be symbolic of how early Canadian women whose sexuality was beyond the conventional norms lived and wrote about it. The critical reception of texts that moved beyond dominant social ideologies in early Canadian literature, as elsewhere, shows the link between literary criticism and a public discourse of social purity. Nonetheless, in the letters and poetry, Wetherald and Coleman left a discreet but concrete memorial of their love for one another and of the covert, subtle conditions under which it could thrive, or at least survive. Recalling Wetherald's love poetry may or may not increase her stature in the canon of Canada's early poetry, but it definitely shows a more interesting poet than has heretofore been recognized.

Notes

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[1] William Wilfred Campbell lived from 1860-1918. He was an ordained minister until 1891, after which time he moved to Ottawa where he worked for the civil service until the end of his life. He is sometimes remembered alongside the Confederation Poets, but more often his moderate poetic output is remembered as "Romantic, transcendentalist, and imperialist" and he "was not held in high regard by the generation of Canadians who succeeded him" (Wicken, "Campbell" 168).

[2] Edward William Thomson lived from 1849-1924. He was a political writer for the Toronto *Globe* newspaper in 1878, but he left in 1891 after disagreeing with the Liberal election platform for unrestricted reciprocity with the U.S. He had become the editorial page consultant by that point. He won a prize for the story, "Petherick's peril" he published in *Youth's Companion* in 1886, and he moved to Boston to become a revising editor for that magazine after leaving the *Globe*. In 1901 Thomson returned to Canada, first to write for the Montreal newspaper the *Star* and then to work as the Canadian correspondent for the Boston *Transcript*. He was a poet and short story writer as well as a journalist, and, according to McMullen, his fiction endures although his poetry does not (McMullen, "Thomson" 1117-18).

[3] John Garvin lived from 1872-1934. He was an editor who published many early Canadian writers including Wetherald and Coleman. In 1905, he co-edited Isabella Valancy Crawford's *The Collected Poems of Isabella Valancy Crawford* with Wetherald, and in 1931, he edited Wetherald's collected poetical works, *Lyrics and Sonnets*. He was married to poet Katherine Hale, who also promoted many women writers in reviews and articles.

[4] Duncan Campbell Scott lived from 1862-1947. According to George Wicken, he became a civil servant for John A. Macdonald's government, working in for the Department of Indian Affairs. He was a prominent poet, who is remembered as one of the "Confederation Poets," and along with Archibald Lampman and William Wilfred Campbell, he was one of the authors of the "At the Mermaid Inn" articles that appeared in the *Globe* in 1892-93 (Wicken, "Scott"1042-45).

[5] To read the full letter from Dorothy Rungeling to Jennifer Chambers, see the Appendix.

[6] Wetherald wrote a piece devoted to her memories of her father entitled "My Father as I Knew Him" for *The Canadian Friend*, a copy of which can be found in the Rockwood Academy Collection in Special Collections at the University of Guelph.

[7] Some early periodicals are obscure, such as this one, and are not included in periodical indexes, serials listings, or early reference texts, so I have had to rely on university library catalogues for publication dates. According to the University of Toronto library catalogue, *St. Nicholas, an Illustrated Magazine for Young Folks*, was published out of New York from November 1873-June 1943.

[8] Smiley "Rose," 1016.

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[9] While archival evidence of *Wives and Daughters* remains scant today, E.W. Thomson, the editor of *Youth's Companion* and a correspondent and friend of Wetherald's, wrote in a letter to her, "Really *Wives and Daughters* is remarkably well done–far and away the ablest literary paper that Canada has ever had" (Thomson letter to Wetherald, 24 April 1893).

[10] The acclaim Wetherald received for *The House of Trees* is documented in Margaret Coulby Whitridge's article, "The Distaff Side of the Confederation Group: Women's Contribution to Early Nationalist Canadian Literature," *Atlantis* 4 (1978): 30-9. There are also references to it in O.J. Stevenson's chapter "A Balm for Pain," *A People's Best*. Toronto: Musson, 1927, 193-200, and in John Garvin's "Introduction," *Lyrics and Sonnets*. By Ethelwyn Wetherald. Toronto: Thomas Nelson, 1931, v-xvii.

[11] According to Cal Smiley, in 1892 Adam succumbed to the financial prospects of literary publishing in the U.S. He spent time in Akron, Ohio, Chicago, but mostly New York, where he died in 1912 (Smiley "Adam," 25). According to McMullen, Thomson moved to Boston in 1891 to be the revising editor on the *Youth's Companion*. Although he returned to Canada, he ended his career working for a Boston newspaper, and "he died in Boston at the home of his grandson" (McMullen "Thomson," 1117-18). McMullen and Campbell also make the following statement: "Editor and writer E.W. Thomson appears to have been [Wetherald's] closest friend as well as mentor" (16).

[12] Many of Thomson's letters to Wetherald are located at the Archives of Ontario in Toronto.

[13] In Dorothy Rungeling's (Wetherald's daughter) biography of Wetherald, she wrote of finding two bundles of letters after Wetherald's death:"[A] neat bundle had the words "KEEP! LETTERS FROM FAMOUS PEOPLE." Along with this was another bundle of letters from a romance she had when young, which had faded into oblivion due to a terrible misunderstanding but many years later was rekindled as a great friendship between the two involved. These letters were destroyed as I knew she would wish them to be" (8). It is interesting to note that Rungeling makes no reference to the gender of the letter-writer, and it is possible to assume, as I do, that she refers to letters from Helena Coleman to Wetherald. Unfortunately, no letters from Coleman to Wetherald have been found in archives. Furthermore, there appears to have been a gap of time between extant letters, which might account for the misunderstanding and the resumption of letters between them.

[14] See Appendix C.

[15] The timeline here is based on letters, Wetherald's "Reminiscences of the Poet" in *Lyrics and Sonnets* (1931) and photographs. Wetherald's letter to John Garvin in 1911 says that she and Coleman had not seen one another since her book came out, in 1907, which is the earliest extant reference to their friendship. When and how they met remain elusive biographical details.

[16] Wetherald is probably referring to 1907, when *The Last Robin* appeared. Her next collection of poetry, *Tree-Top Mornings* did not appear until 1921.

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[17] Marjorie Pickthall lived from 1883-1922. She was born in England, but her family moved to Canada when she was six years old. According to S.R. MacGillivray, "her literary reputation rests ultimately on two major collections of poetry, *The drift of pinions* (1913) and *The lamp of poor souls* (1916)" ("Pickthall" 918-9). She also wrote short fiction and verse-drama. Her poetry is said to be filled with Romantic influences of dream-like idealism (MacGillivray "Pickthall," 919). Pickthall was in poor health most of her life, but she travelled to England and back, and eventually settled on Vancouver Island, where she died of an embolus following an operation (MacGillivray "Pickthall," 919).

[18] Helen Coleman, as I have mentioned, lived with and was raised by her aunt, Helena Coleman.

[19] Wetherald wrote about Pickthall in the following correspondence: Wetherald letter to Mrs. Edgar, 2 July 1910, National Archives of Canada, Ottawa, Ontario; Wetherald letter to Mr. Hammond, 27 January [1921], Archives of Ontario, Toronto, Ontario; Wetherald letter to Garvin, 29 July 1911, Queen's University Archives, Kingston, Ontario; Wetherald letter to Garvin, 16 June 1930, Queen's University Archives, Kingston, Ontario; Wetherald letter to John Garvin, 20 June 1930, Queen's University Archives, Kingston, Ontario.

[20] It is interesting to note that the letters from Ethelwyn Wetherald to Helena Coleman in Helena Coleman's literary archives are incomplete. They can be identified as Ethelwyn Wetherald's by the address "Fenwick, ON" and by the penmanship. These letters are never addressed "Dear Helena," but rather they use terms of endearment such as "Dear and Ever Dear" or "Dear Admirer of Pen Pricks" and the one complete letter is signed by "Thorn" in reference to Wetherald's poking and prodding Coleman to publish her poetry.

[21] Helena Coleman's literary archives are held at Victoria University Library, University of Toronto, Toronto, ON.

[22] For example, in an early letter to a Mrs. Edgar, writing with respect to Marjorie Pickthall's poetry, Wetherald responds by discussing two poems sent to her by Pickthall, and a further poem "'The Lam of Poor Souls' [which] was copied for me by Miss Helena Coleman, who knows how much I appreciate Miss Pickthall's work" (Wetherald letter to Mrs. Edgar, 2 July 1910).

[23] Some letters from Wetherald to her unnamed, male, British cousin on her maternal, Thistlethwaite side of the family from between 1910-11 can be found at the Archives of Ontario. There is much discussion of genealogy, as the cousin compiled a family history, and the letters are rambling, personal accounts of family situations, medical history, and poetry. Evidently, the cousin and Wetherald exchanged poems.

[24] Any of Wetherald's poems that are referred to but not given in full in the text appear in Appendix B, p. 256.

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[25] Any of Coleman's poems that are referred to but not given in full in the text appear in Appendix D, p. 263.

[26] John Garvin was the editor who selected, arranged and published Wetherald's collected verse. In a responding letter to Garvin, after he must have requested to publish Wetherald's collected verse, she wrote, "This is very generous of you – to undertake so much and to do so much to put my verse into proper shape. The only proviso I can make is that you should do it all – the selecting, arranging, omitting, etc. as well as choice of type, quality or paper, kind of cover, everything. I hand them over with a big sigh of relief. I can't say that my verse doesn't interest me; but there are a hundred things that interest me more" (Wetherald letter to Garvin, 20 May 1930).

[27] Stevenson's reference to Wetherald's poetry as a "balm for pain" is a quotation based on Archibald Lampman's reaction to her first collection of poetry. He wrote a poem entitled "A Balm for Pain" as a response to reading her collection *The House of Trees and Other Poems* (1895).

CONCLUSION

Making and Breaking Literary Reputation

The case studies of May Agnes Fleming, Susie Frances Harrison, and Ethelwyn Wetherald give us portraits of how three Canadian women writers of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries imagined beyond the social constraints of gender and sexuality in their writings, and how they managed their public, literary careers. Fleming, writing almost exclusively for women in the popular genre of domestic fiction, creates antidomestic narratives that expose the oppression of women in poor marriages, and shows women's successes in the workforce and their capability of handling personal autonomy. Harrison takes on the obscure, rigorous genre of the villanelle to create character sketches of French-Canadians for her Anglo audience, and, in her novels she writes about the nature of Canadian politics to examine fractious nationalisms within different cultural communities. Wetherald writes in traditional lyrics and sonnets, but her critically unexamined love poetry reveals a relationship negotiated through poems and letters with fellow poet Helena Coleman. Her later love poetry explores radical ideas about the choice of singlehood for women.

Subsequent changes in public discourse and literary taste have determined how these writers and their genres have been considered (or not) in Canadian literary history. Some genres flourished, as Fleming's domestic fiction did in her day, but suffered the judgement of literary fashion in the next generation. The nationalist agenda prevalent in Harrison's poetry and novels reinforces the sense of Canadian political insecurity of the time, and her works struggled to find readers both generically and thematically. Wetherald's love poems show the need for further critical investigation into early Canadian love poetry.

As I have done throughout this study, in the concluding chapter, I will use specific incidents from the lives of Fleming, Harrison, and Wetherald as exemplars of larger issues to characterize how their literary reputations dwindled, and eventually petered out.

IV.i Fleming's Posthumous Scandal

May Agnes Fleming left evidence of her own poor marriage in her will as well as in the antimarriage sentiments she expressed in her domestic fiction. Nine years after Fleming's death, her son Frederick was fined for "petty larceny." According to an article in a Saint John, NB newspaper "he was accused and found guilty by a jury of obtaining $6 from Fanny Klein under false pretenses" ("Secret," n.pag.). The article, entitled "The Secret of Her Life," used the incident as a pretext for disclosing the contents of Fleming's will, which, as I have explained, excluded her husband John entirely and left everything to their children. In the newspaper account, John Fleming is described as a "foreman for Smith Brothers, engineers and boiler-makers. He earns good wages and is evidently a man of some education." John is then quoted in a diatribe in which he blames the "fine literary will" of his "highly intellectual" wife for the "ignorance" of his sons, since they were never made to finish school, because their inheritance money allowed them to become lazy ("Secret," n.pag.).

Fleming tried to make her children independent as best she could in her will, but the situation reported in the newspaper makes it evident that her son Frederick moved back to Saint John and resumed contact with his father. Frederick got caught treating a woman shabbily and conning her out of money, and John, as his parent, is interviewed for the article and takes the opportunity to vent his complaints about the will that had disinherited him. Fleming would have undoubtedly abhorred both the idea that her children wasted the opportunities she had tried to provide for them and that she was somehow to blame for it. She would probably also abhor the fact that John Fleming, after her death, had found an opportunity to make her out to be a failed mother and inconsiderate wife. Remembering Fleming's self-portrayal as the obedient housewife to the newspaper reporter who visited her home, it is clear that her reputation mattered to her. Moreover, in the news story, John is represented as an intelligent, hard-working man. The posthumous blame he places on Fleming leaves the impression that her success as a writer led to the breakdown of his domestic life and the problems that beset her oldest child. In speaking to the reporter, John tarnishes Fleming's memory and her literary reputation as a way of lashing out at her beyond the grave. Fleming's literary reputation by this time was in decline. It reflects a unique chapter in the general theme about the posthumous difficulty for early Canadian women writers to sustain a long-standing readership.

As Carole Gerson, Carrie MacMillan, and James Doyle have shown, early Canadian women writers suffered discrimination at the hands of literary anthologists, especially modernists, and have largely been lost. Once lost, it has been difficult to reclaim space for early English-Canadian women writers no matter how popular and successful they were in their day because we continue to have little context for them. Their writings appear outmoded by today's standards. Fleming's novels could surely be republished today, as dramatizations of domestic life beyond the wedding, and explorations of women succeeding outside the boundaries of domesticity. Perhaps, though, her novels are too long and her plots too convoluted to find readers today. For modern audiences, her critical assets as a writer of fiction are likely to get lost in the web of incident and the shifts of setting that accompany shifts of fortune. By contrast, her shorter stories and novellas, like *Fated to Marry*, might fare better among modern readers, and they, too, reveal her understanding of the patriarchal paradigm, the struggle to fight against it, and to move women safely beyond it. Fleming's shorter fiction usually reveals her resolute female characters with considerably less Victorian clutter than the long serialized novels that won her fame and fortune. They could go a long way on historical survey courses or in courses on genre fiction, to show both the formulaic nature of her domestic fiction, and her social criticism written within the formula.

IV.ii Harrison's Quest for Self-fulfillment

Unlike Fleming, who moved to the United States and successfully formed her literary reputation there, Susie Frances Harrison stayed in Canada, determinedly so, where she then often agonized over the development of her literary reputation. Her correspondence, deposited in a number of literary archives, shows her persistence with literary acquaintances, critics, and editors to have her work accepted for publication, and to become a recognized literary figure in Canada. An example from her correspondence neatly highlights Harrison's ambitions, and incidentally makes a sharp contrast with Ethelwyn Wetherald. When Wetherald was approached to read publicly by William Wilfred Campbell, as we have seen, she demurred out of humility. In contrast, Harrison wrote boldly to Campbell about securing a similar invitation for herself:

> I have a suggestion to make to you which I hope you will treat quite candidly. Perhaps you may remember that last year I was invited to

> the meeting of the Royal Society in Ottawa and asked to read some extracts from my books, and that I was obliged to decline. This was in reality the second invitation I have received from the Society and no one regrets more than I do the fact that I was unavoidably prevented from accepting either. Would there be any likelihood of my being asked this year? For myself I am not so desirous of undergoing what I am sure is something of an ordeal, but one's friends, who do not know that I have been asked twice, make so much of these matters. I feel certain you will not misunderstand my question. I could this year, if asked, go down to Ottawa and be greatly pleased to read, presumably some extracts from "Bourg-Marie," [*sic*] but of course, I would not care to be thought over-zealous in the matter. Pray do not move in the direction of suggesting my name or anything like that unless you wish to, personally; no doubt, there are new authors before the Society each year, and your programmes may be already made up. Let me congratulate you on your latest publication of the new book of poems. (Harrison letter to Campbell, 25 April 1900)

Harrison finds herself in a predicament after having had to decline two previous invitations to read at the Royal Society. She does not say why, but we can presume that it was the result of her obligations as music teacher in the Conservatory. When circumstances change, she wants to revive the opportunity to promote her works and to receive recognition. Yet as a woman she does not want to appear demanding or self-promoting. Having nominated herself, in effect, she must then plead with Campbell to act only if he will assume the responsibility for nominating her, or at least make it appear that way.

Harrison's correspondence reveals a tenacious writer who believed in Canada's literary and cultural potential, and who considered herself one of its pioneering writers. Harrison's dedication to Canada and to her own literary and cultural contributions is impressive given the combination of gender discrimination and national discrimination she faced. Nonetheless, her determined self-promotion was only moderately successful in her own day, as she conceded near the end of her life, and what little reputation she had was soon eclipsed so that she is virtually unknown (and unread) in Canada today.

However, the time to read Harrison may have come. An edited edition of her unpublished novel *Search for a Canadian* might well find a place now. Harrison's portrait of the sympathetic American who can see beneath the fragmented political nature of the country to the sources of real freedom and self-fulfilment, dramatized through characters with staunch will and no little integrity, would surely make a worthy addition to survey courses in Canadian literature. It could well be read alongside Sara Jeannette Duncan's *The Imperialist*, a novel set in Ontario about the tensions between imperialists and republicans, often included on such courses. In fact, it might make a useful antidote to Duncan's genteel, British-dominated imperialists. Harrison's *Search for a Canadian* tackles an ever-present Canadian conflict: the search to understand and define Canadian identity by looking at the myriad ways in which "being Canadian" can be identified. Indeed, it is no less pressing a question today, perhaps made more relevant over time. In publishing Harrison's novel today, more than a century after it was written, I believe it could reach two different audiences: the university student taking Canadian literature, and the historical novel buff. There is no doubt in my mind that it deserves an audience, if only a specialist one, and it should be given the chance to reach some audience—not a wider one, as it has never been published.

IV.iii Wetherald's Modest Disclaimer

Ethelwyn Wetherald was predominantly a poet and a journalist, but early in her career, in 1887, she co-wrote the historical romance novel, *An Algonquin Maiden: A Romance of the Early Days of Upper Canada* with Graeme Mercer Adam.[1] Adam was a Scottish-born immigrant to Canada, who, upon moving became a manager at a book-retailing house in Canada in 1858. In 1860, he became a partner and the business was renamed Adam, Stevenson, and Company. Adam was also involved in the publishing and editing of a number of early periodicals in Canada, including *The British American Magazine* (1863-64), *The Canada Bookseller* (1869-72), The *Canadian Monthly and National Review* (1872-78), *Rose-Belford's Canadian Monthly* (1879-82), and *The Canadian Educational Monthly* (1883-88) (Smiley 25). As Cal Smiley says, Adam "nurtured Canadian literary life in the last quarter of the nineteenth century, not with any artistic creativity but with his practical talents as an editor and publisher" (25).[2]

An Algonquin Maiden, the novel he co-authored with Wetherald is remembered today as "an unfocused look at aristocratic life in the Upper Canada of the 1820s. It sought to be no more than 'breezy, lofty, wholesome, and bright'—Adam's own description of good fiction" (Smiley, "Adam" 25). Given Adam's influence and his seasoned entrepreneurial skills in publishing, one would have expected his only attempt at fiction to have made quite an impact. Yet *An Algonquin Maiden* was, for all intents and purposes, a failure in Canada. The front matter to the novel suggests that a second novel by the same authors will follow, but it was never written.[3] Neither did *An Algonquin Maiden* ever make it into a second printing. This collaborative novel was also Wetherald's only attempt in the genre, and it was something that she renounced late in her career, as I will show.

Sara Jeannette Duncan reviewed *An Algonquin Maiden* in two different publications. In the review for *The Week*, Duncan separates the roles of the authors, and uses the occasion to scold Wetherald for the romanticism of the novel and to praise Adam for its historical interest:

> Mr. Adam's hand is easy to detect in the book. He does not romance. He will be doubtless equally guilty in the eyes of the realistic host with Miss Wetherald in supplying the facts upon which the romance is based; but we do not catch him *in flagrante delicto* anywhere. He does not allude to the Macleods' man-of-all-work [Tredway] as "the ancient servitor," to Edward Macleod as "the young master of Pine Towers," or to Miss de Berczy as "the lovely Hélène," and Miss Wetherald does. [...] To return to Mr. Adam, it is impossible to help wishing that his guiding and restraining hand were evident upon more pages of "An Algonquin Maiden" than it is. Where he assists in the character portraiture, the result is much more satisfactory than Miss Wetherald's unaided creations, delicate and graceful though some of these may be. Allan Dunlop is decidedly the strongest individual in the book, and he owes most of his personality to Mr. Adam. The historical and political parts of the volume, which form by no means too much ballast for

> Miss Wetherald's more aerial writing, we owe entirely to Mr. Adam.
>
> (Duncan "Saunterings" 1887, 111-12)

One wonders how it is possible for Duncan to separate the hands of the authors so confidently. Both authors' names are attached to the novel equally (though alphabetically). It seems presumptuous for Duncan to declare that Adam "does not romance" when he has co-written a romance novel. She assumes Adam's reputation as a historical writer must account for all of the straightforward, historical detail in *An Algonquin Maiden*, while Wetherald, the new writer, is blamed for the romantic details. These aspects are, of course, gender stereotypes, with the male author ascribed the factual side and the female author the flighty, overwritten parts. Even if Duncan had confidential information about who wrote which portions of the novel—and there is no evidence that she did—her overwhelming praise of Adam compared to her disparaging remarks about Wetherald's writing show a biased view, and her forthright conviction in expressing it in print suggests it was a communal bias. It seems surprising, given Duncan's strong political voice, that she is oblivious to the sexism of her own review. She discloses prejudices about gender and writing, with no suggestion anywhere that Adam, as editor and publisher, as well as author would have had authority and control over every aspect of the novel. It may not be far-fetched to suggest that Duncan may have been protecting her own interests in writing favourably about Adam, so influential in the world of publishing, while haranguing the rising young woman writer.

Duncan was also asked to review *An Algonquin Maiden* for the Toronto daily newspaper *The Globe*, and as Carole Gerson notes, she alters her viewpoint for the more general audience:

> Duncan's ability to adjust her criticism to her audience is evident in her discussion of the same book in her "Woman's World" column in the *Globe*. Aware that she was now writing for a broader audience (and that Ethelwyn Wetherald was a popular contributor to the *Globe* under the pseudonym 'Bel Thistlewaite'), she donned the hat of literary nationalism and enthusiastically recommended *An Algonquin Maiden* as an "unaccustomed literary sensation […] in a land where literary sensations are about as frequent as earthquakes." (Gerson, *Purer* 61; Duncan "Woman's," 6)

Duncan's *Globe* review was much kinder to Wetherald, and avoided the unfavourable discrimination between Adam and Wetherald. Writing for a readership who knew and liked Wetherald in *The Globe*, Duncan treats her kindly, and is in fact impersonal in her comments on the authors. Given Duncan's strong, often faultfinding articles on Canadian literature in her "Saunterings" column in *The Week*,[4] it is surprising to see such a complete turnaround in *The Globe*. Did no one in the literary community notice the change? Duncan's vacillating reviews of the same novel show her understanding of different audiences, and they also show the influence of public discourse over critical evaluation.

In an interview in *Everywoman's World* in 1920, Wetherald expressed her views of newspapers and their influence: "I once wrote for the papers under the name Bel Thistlethwaite," she said, "and wondered why poets, essayists, lecturers and artists of the brush all loved to be noticed on my page. I know why now. It is because one in ten thousand reads a poem or an essay, and all the rest read the newspapers" (Burkholder 38). Given her understanding of the power of the printed review, Wetherald undoubtedly felt the sting of Duncan's harsh words about her in *The Week*, a publication for which she also wrote articles and where she published poetry. We cannot know if Duncan discouraged Wetherald from novel-writing, but if nothing else, the harsh review probably encouraged Wetherald to put her writing efforts elsewhere.

Late in Wetherald's career, when John Garvin approached her about editing a volume of her collected verse, she agreed, as long as he made every editorial decision. In subsequent correspondence, as she remembered where and when certain poems had been originally published, she said, "If it would be possible to avoid mention of The Algonquin work I should consider it a very great favor" (Wetherald letter to Garvin, 13 June 1930). Wetherald's request to Garvin is significant. It shows her embarrassment about the early novel; she would like to see its existence forgotten, and have it expunged from her literary *oeuvre*, so that it would have no bearing on her literary reputation. Garvin complies with her request, and omits mention of the novel entirely in his introduction, showing his understanding, if not his agreement, that the novel ought not be remembered in a celebratory collection of Wetherald's poetry (Wetherald letter to Garvin, 13 June 1930; Garvin "Intro.").

In her "Reminiscences of the Poet" in *Lyrics and Sonnets* (1931), Wetherald explained, "Unless there is a direct inspiration I prefer discursive essay writing to writing stories" (Wetherald, "Reminiscences" xiii). This statement is as close to an admission of early prose fiction as she gave her later audience. *An Algonquin Maiden* is virtually unknown among early English-Canadian works, and this is probably due to Wetherald's own suppression of it in *Lyrics and Sonnets* or in any other summations of her work. Wetherald's daughter's memoir corroborates the idea that she wanted the novel to be forgotten:

> The book was titled *The Algonquin Maiden*. It might better have been named Ethelwyn's Folly. The book was foreign to her usual style of writing and I am sure she wished that she could have erased the whole

> experience. This book got poor reviews and was never spoken of at home. I was unaware that it was written until after her death. (Rungeling 53).

Wetherald chose to suppress the early novel, to erase it from her literary career as best she could. Instead, she staked her reputation on her journalism and poetry, preferring to leave her attempt at novel-writing as a youthful error in judgement.

Wetherald was a good poet, and many of her lyric poems are surely readable today, and worthy of consideration in anthologies. However, in terms of recovering literary texts, Wetherald's relationship with Coleman, explored, codified, and nuanced in letters and poems, could well be brought out in a carefully edited small volume bringing together the dialogue on love between them. The compilation would gather the poems on a common theme, and the whole would perhaps amount to something greater than the sum of the poets, enlivened by the romantic interplay. Their story is subtle enough that it appears not to have been noticed by readers of the day, and it may only have been known to some close friends. Yet, with Pinehurst Island as a women writer's retreat, perhaps a Sapphic writer's retreat, there are likely many more stories to be added to this one when further recovery and re-reading are done.

IV.iv Three Perspectives on who We Were (and Are)

A literary reputation is made up of several factors: the author's own public performance, popular and critical reception, and promotion—either by the writer or the critics. How one's writing fits into literary fashion and convention through genre and theme also plays a part. Fleming, Harrison, and Wetherald cover a variety of genres and explore very different themes, and they are only three of the early women writers in Canada whose works we have largely forgotten. Each of them followed literary convention and fashion, but each explored themes in personal, often distinctive terms. Fleming did so by using the genre of domestic fiction to dramatize her concerns for women and the condition of femininity that limited them to the domestic sphere and the confines of marriage. Harrison used different genres—traditional poetic forms, short stories, and novels—always about Canada. She persisted in promoting her works to publishers and critics, confident that her own talent, ability, and perceptions would find an audience. Wetherald encoded her love poetry to Coleman in convention and made a considerable impression as a nature poet.

Taken together, these writers, so different in their styles, predilections and themes, suggest the breadth of women literary figures from the mid-nineteenth through the early twentieth centuries in Canada. Re-reading Fleming, Harrison, and

Wetherald in terms of cultural and literary history sheds light on early Canada by providing a richer view of its literature via its "forgotten" proponents. The value of returning to earlier works by women has several aspects—to see what literature formed the national imagination, to evaluate—and enjoy—the works themselves, and to examine the progress of the ideologies of gender, nationalism, sexuality, and genre in early Canada. Early Canadian women writers make a difference first by imagining change, and then by publishing their imaginings, in the hope and belief that change and progress will follow. What motivated Fleming, Harrison, and Wetherald to write was in part the desire for change.

Early success, persistence, and an awareness of expectation also motivated the writers in this study. In a newspaper interview, Fleming explained the impact her early convent-school classmates had on her desire to write and to be well-received:

> "I can remember when only a little thing at school in a convent at St. John, New Brunswick, composing fairy tales with which I used to edify the other children, who, to do them credit, were never so completely carried away with my tales as I could have wished. Perhaps"—Mrs. Fleming looked up pleasantly—"it was this unappreciativeness of my audience that turned my thoughts to my pen." (Qtd. in "Mrs. May Agnes Fleming" 5)

Fleming invokes her friends' reactions to her early stories with becoming modesty, though it is impossible not to infer that she was successful enough in these youthful excursions to carry on putting pen to paper to capture and impress an audience. Her ambition led her to become a prolific and popular writer in her day.

In a letter, Susie Frances Harrison wrote, "Still, the great thing is to have enough to say and to keep on saying it" (Harrison letter to Stedman, 10 May 1895). It is easy to imagine that as Harrison struggled for literary fame or popularity, she repeated this idea as a mantra and took some consolation from it. In many ways, it signifies Harrison's determination as a Canadian woman to keep writing in the hopes of making an impression upon the early Canadian literary and cultural landscape.

Finally, as Ethelwyn Wetherald wrote in a letter, "One has to try to live up not only to what one wants to be but to what one's friends want one to be" (Wetherald letter to Hammond, 3 February 1921). Wetherald, more than the other two, expresses a self-consciousness and shows an awareness of the expectations that surrounded her. She was mindful of her own practice as a Canadian writer, and of how others might regard and judge her.

In their own words, through interviews and letters, Fleming, Harrison and Wetherald show us how aware they were of the social and literary climate in which they lived, and how determined they were, in their different ways, to be contributors to it. The social climate imposed expectations that women writers should write within the limitations of gender and normative sexuality. So they wrote in conventional genres, negotiating and sometimes subverting the pressures of social and literary convention and conformity. Their literary contributions remind us that we have only begun to ask questions—why would a woman use domestic fiction to write antidomestic plots? Or, how does the fragmentation of Canadian politics affect the national imagination? Or, what are the boundaries and limitations in writing about same-sex love in early Canada? There are many more questions to ask and consider. I have made a start by exploring aspects of the work of May Agnes Fleming, Susie Frances Harrison, and Ethelwyn Wetherald specifically, and, I trust, about early Canadian women's writing in general.

Notes

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[1] Graeme Mercer Adam lived from 1839-1912. According to Cal Smiley, he was a Scottish-born immigrant to Canada, who arrived "in 1858 as manager for the Canadian book-retailing enterprise of Cunningham Geikie" (Smiley 25). He was also a major contributor to *The Week* (1883-96).

[2] Adam "compiled the *Handbook of commercial union: a collection of papers read before the Commercial Union Club, Toronto, with speeches, letters and other documents in favour of unrestricted reciprocity wit the United States* (Toronto, 1888); [he wrote] *The Canadian North-west: its history and its troubles, from the early days of the fur-trade to the era of the railway and the settler; with incidents of travel in the region, and the narrative of three insurrections* (Toronto, 1885) in response to the Riel rebellion; and preparing *Toronto, old and new* (Toronto, 1891)." There were also contributions to other travel compilations, historical and educational works on Canada. (Smiley "Adam," 25).

[3] The front matter to *An Algonquin Maiden* says: "By the Same Authors. Preparing for early publication: *A Tale of the Empire Loyalists*." There is no record of such a publication.

[4] Cf. Duncan's column "Saunterings"*The Week*, September 30, 1886 which begins "We are still an eminently unliterary people." Many samples are included under the subheading "Literature" in Thomas E. Tausky's *Sara Jeannette Duncan: Selected Jouranlism*, Ottawa: Tecumseh Press, 1978.

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APPENDIX A: Selected Poems by Seranus (Susie Frances Harrison)

Selections from *Pine, Rose, and Fleur de lis* (1891)

STE. ANNE DE BEAUPRE

In the sacred hamlet of Bonne Ste. Anne
One is never far from the Wayside Cross,
One is always near some talisman,

For relics, preserv'd on a famous plan
Abound, nor suffer change or loss
In the sacred hamlet of Bonne Ste. Anne.

There, since the century first began,
The crucifix stands, o'ergrown with moss;
One is always near some talisman,

Some skull that the poor devout may scan,
Some bone that glows with a wonderful gloss,
In the sacred hamlet of Bonne Ste. Anne.

For a tooth, or a toe, the caravan
Of pilgrims away its life would toss–
In the sacred hamlet of Bonne Ste. Anne.

Here are the nails half buried in bran!
Here is the corner Wayside Cross!
In the sacred hamlet of Bonne Ste. Anne
One is always near *some* talisman.

AT ST. BARTHELEMI

In the parish of St. Barthelemi
There is always something taking place,

A procession, a fête, or a jubilee,

Some kind of religious revelry
That pleases the fervid populace
In the parish of St. Barthelemi.

The saints must each be remember'd you see,
Which perfectly suits the Gallic race…
A procession, a fête, or a jubilee,

Fix'd by the Church's fast decree,
Makes them both happy and full of grace.
In the parish of St. Barthelemi

You will easily learn to bow the knee,
And each in its turn you will straight embrace–
A procession, a fête, or a jubilee.

In fact, there is always on the *tapis*,
Moving at mediaeval pace,
In the parish of St. Barthelemi,
A procession, a fête, or a jubilee.

CATHARINE PLOUFFE

This gray-hair'd spinster, Catharine Plouffe–
Observe her, a contrast to convent chits,
At her spinning wheel, in the room in the roof!

Yet there are those who believe that the hoof
Of a horse is nightly heard as she knits–
This gray-hair'd spinster, Catharine Plouffe–

Stockings of fabulous warp and woof,
And that old Benedict's black pipe she permits
At her spinning wheel, in the room in the roof,

For thirty years. So the gossip. A proof
Of her constant heart? Nay. No one twits
This gray-hair'd spinster, Catharine Plouffe;

The neighbours respect her but hold aloof,
Admiring her back as she steadily sits
At her spinning wheel, in her room in the roof.

Will they ever marry? Just ask her. Pouf!
She would like you to know she'd not lost her wits–
This gray-hair'd spinster, Catharine Plouffe,
At her spinning wheel in the room in the roof!

BENEDICT BROSSE

I

Hale, and though sixty, without a stoop,
What does old Benedict want with a wife?
Can he not make his own pea soup?

Better than most men–never droop
In the August noons when storms are rife?
Hale, and though sixty, without a stoop,

Supreme in the barn, the kitchen, the coop,
Can he not use both broom and knife?
Can he not make his own pea soup?

Yet Widow Gouin in command of the troop
Of gossips, can tell of the spinsters' strife.
Hale, and though sixty, without a stoop,

There's a dozen would jump through the golden hoop,
For he's rich, and hardy for his time of life,
–Can he not make his own pea soup?

But Benedict's wise and the village group
He ignores, while he smokes and plays on his fife.
Hale, and though sixty, without a stoop,
Can he not make his own pea soup?

II.

As for Catharine–now, *she's* a woman of sense,
Though hard to win, so Benedict thinks,
Though hard to please and near with the pence.

Down to the widow Rose Archambault's fence
Her property runs and Benedict winks–
As for Catharine–now, she's a woman of sense.

At times he has wished to drop all pretense
And ask her–she's fond of a bunch of pinks,
Though hard to please and near with the pence,

But he never progresses–the best of evidence
That from *medias res* our Benedict shrinks.
As for Catharine–now, she's a woman of sense,

A woman of rarest intelligence;
She manages well, is as close as a sphinx,
Though hard to please and near with the pence.

Still, that is a virtue at St. Clements.
Look at Rose Archambault, the improvident minx!
As for Catharine now, *she's* a woman of sense,
Though hard to please and near with the pence.

APPENDIX B: Selected Poems by Agnes Ethelwyn Wetherald

Selections from *The House of the Trees and other poems* (1895)

UNSPOKEN

My lover comes down the long leafy street
Through tenderly falling rain;
His footsteps near our portal veer,
Go past–then turn again.

O can it be he is knocking below,
Or here at my door above?
So gentle and small it sounds in the hall,
So loud in the ear of love.

But never a word of love has he said,
And never a word crave I,
For why should one long for the daylight strong
When dawn is in the sky?

O a dewy rose-garden is the house,
A garden shut from the sun;
The breath of it sweet floats up, as my feet
Float down to my waiting one.

But if ever a word of love thinks he,
It falls from his heart still-born;
Who bends to the rose does not haste to close
His hand around bud and thorn.

The beautiful soul that is in him turns
His beautiful face agleam;
My own soul flies to feast his eyes,
Where the silent love-words teem.

Our talk is of books, and of thoughts and moods,
Of wild flowers in the rain;

And he leans his cheek, when we do not speak,
On his chair where my hand had lain.

Yet never a word of love does he say,
And never a word crave I'
For the faint green May would wither away
At the quick touch of July.

And at last–at last we look our last,
And the dim day grows more dim;
But his eyes still shine in these eyes of mine,
And my soul goes forth with him.

For though not a word of love does he say
Still never a word crave I;
For the words of earth are of little worth
When a song drops out of the sky.

Selections from *Tangled in Stars* (1902)

ENCHANTMENT

Dearest, give your soul to me;
Let it in your glances shine;
Let a path of ecstasy
Stretch between your eyes and mine.
Should you press me to your heart,
That enchanted,
That enchanted little pathway must depart.

Dearest, give your thoughts to me;
Let them through the distance drear
Make unceasing melody
To my raptured inner ear.
Should you clasp me–ah, the cost!
All that elfin,
All that elfin music were in clamor lost.

AT PARTING

Good-bye! Goodbye! My soul goes after thee,
Quick as a bird that quickens on the wing,
Softly as winter softens into spring;
And as the mood sways to the swaying sea,
So is my spirit drawn resistlessly.
Good-bye! Yet closer round my life shall cling
Thy tenderness, the priceless offering
That drifts through distance daily unto me.

O eager soul of mine, fly fast, fly fast!
Take with thee hope and courage, thoughts that thrill
The heart with gladness under sombre skies.
O living tenderness, that no sharp blast
Of bitter fate or circumstance can chill,
My life with thine grows strong or fails or dies.

IN A DARK HOUR

Yes, yes, I know what you would say, and yet
Life is so sweet! life is so very sweet!
Leaves dancing in the sun make quick the beat
Of saddest heart, and Love must still forget
Life's toil and care, its fever and its fret.
How blue the sky shines through the summer's heat,
How merrily the blood defies the sleet;
One golden hour illumes a gray year. Let

Those talk of tears who never knew relief;
For me the hoarded honey of the past
Outlives the wintry interval of pain;
Come loneliness, or lovelessness, or grief,
The memory of days too sweet to last
Shall make my heart run o'er with joy again.

ABSENCE

Dear gray-winged angel, with the mouth set stern
And time-devouring eyes, the sweetest sweet
Of kisses when two severed lovers meet
Is thine; the cruelest ache in hearts that yearn,
The fears that freeze, the hopes that leap and burn,
Thine–thine! And thine the drum-and-trumpet beat
Of hearts that wait for unreturning feet,
When comes at last the hour of their return.

Of Love's fair ministers thou art the chief.
To jaded souls, asleep beside their vows,
Thou givest hopes, keen joys and vague alarms;
Beneath thy touch the brown and yellow leaf
Turns to pink blossom, and the spring-bright boughs
Frame lovers running to each other's arms.

UNHEARD NIAGARAS

We live among unheard Niagaras.
The force that pushes up the meadow grass,
That swells to ampler roundness ripening fruit,
That lifts the brier rose, were it not mute,
Would thunder o'er the green earth's sunlit tracts,
More loudly than a myriad cataracts.

Selections from *Lyrics and Sonnets* (1931)

THE LONELY LAKE

The lap of waves on a lonely shore
Will find in me not a pulse unstirred.
No sound beside save the splash of an oar,
Whisper of leaves or cry of bird.

I know the brawl of a mountain brook,
The gleam of a pool in a forest nook,
Cold spring water bubbling up
To the fevered lip and the waiting cup,
The thunder of ocean along the beach
And all the languages rivers teach.

But a lonely lake and a lonely shore
Speak to the loneliness in my heart,
And a vehement kinship evermore
Binds us together though apart.

ALONE

The man I cannot comprehend
Is he who dreads alone to be,
Who, if he cannot have a friend,
Would welcome e'en an enemy;

The beggared and unhappy elf
Who craves an alms of words from all,
With no resources in himself
And no internal festival;

Who never felt the shy caress,
When voices failed and footsteps fled,
From the soft hand of Loneliness;
Who never wakened from the dead

The blessed thoughts that shun the crowd,
And over wood and meadow brood,
Where bird and branch and bending cloud
Enweave the spell of solitude;

Who never knew the scholar's lust,
The artist's lone ecstatic day;

Who never strove because he must,
And not for praise or place or pay.

Give me the friend whose honest hand
Glad greeting, glad good-bye, has shown,
Whose soul is fragrant of the land
Where Silence dwelleth all alone.

TWO

Two came to me in the twilight, the vesper
bird had begun,
One was the man that loved me, and with
him another one.

Swift came the one that loved me, and sure
as a river might run;
But swifter and surer before him, entered the
other one.

Close came the one that loved me, his hand on
my hand like a glove,
But close to the heart of my heart was
clinging the one that I love.

'Come without,' said the lover, 'the stars are
beginning above'
So I walked by his side, while between us went
viewless the one that I love.

Strong was the voice of the lover, with tones
like the warmth of the sun;
Soon, soon they were drowned in the sea-strong
Voice of the viewless one.

He spoke and he left me in anger, there by the
edge of the grove,

And men say now I am lonely—they see not
the one that I love.

MARRIAGE VOWS

Since God hath wed me to myself,
There can be no divorce for me;
No easy flight, no sure escape,
From what I have been and shall be.

So, as a masterful brave spouse,
I'll make the weaker vessel strong:
She shall observe her marriage vows
And to her Higher Self belong.

No indolence nor greed shall mar
The supple liveness of her frame;
No sullen doubt nor coldness bar
The path of the creative flame.

She shall not din within mine hears
The tale of old mistake and woe,
But let the dead and buried years
Lie nameless under silent snow.

Since with myself I'm forced to house
I'll make the weaker vessel strong;
She shall observe her marriage vows,
And unto me, her lord, belong.

APPENDIX C: Letter from Dorothy (Wetherald) Rungeling to Jennifer Chambers

403 B Lookout Village
Ridgeville, Ont. L0S 1M0
Aug 20/99

Dear Jennifer:

You letter came yesterday and I am happy to answer your questions.

1. I lived in the Wetherald house from the age of 6 months but was adopted when I was 3 in 1914. Yes it was a very brave thing for a woman of that age to do but it seems that I grew on her as all babies do.

2 Yes she wrote during the days. Not always poetry. She had a vast number of correspondents and always kept up to date with them.
Although I did not at the time feel that my mother was different from other mothers I think now that my school mates thought so.

3 Yes I remember Helena being talked about by Ethelwyn. They were very good friends and as Ethelwyn one wrote, she spent one of her most enjoyable holidays on the island amidst the Thousand Islands which was owned by Helena C. I think there is a description of it in the introduction t her book *Lyrics and Sonnets*. She had so many friends (by mail) that I could not begin to tell you about them. All I really know is that some were quite influential people like Earl Grey, along with many well known poets and writers.

One of the reasons that I did not wish to have a meeting with you was that a friend and I have just finished a book on Ethelwyn. Of course we now have to find a publisher and that is pretty hard, but I would not be happy if I gave all the information I had gathered up to someone else. Once the book gets published, if ever, then there will be information for everyone. I am very happy that you are working on Ethelwyn as she seems to have been left by the wayside as far as Canadian women poets are concerned and at the time she was doing most of her writing she produced not only poetry but prose as well.

I can say that she was a very retiring personality and I think that this is the main reason that she has been more or less forgotten. She always gave the other person credit for doing well rather than to herself.

I hope that this helps you in some way.

Wishing you well with your endeavour,

Dorothy Rungeling

APPENDIX D: Selected Poems by Helena Coleman

Selections from *Songs and Sonnets* (1906)

SINCE KNOWING YOU

Since knowing you I know myself no more;
All that I was and am–the wrong denied,
The insincerity, rebellious pride,
And selfishness behind the mask I wore,
The cold indifference I knew before
You came, the ills I scarcely sought to hide–
And all the ugly train so long defied,
At last into love's crucible I pour.

My pain and privilege! for sin confessed
Is sin repudiated, all its sting
And power made void. This is the final test,
Love's sacred task and deepest offering;
Behold, the hope and germ of all my best
Lies in the very worthlessness I bring!

ABSENCE

When thou art absent, and the grieving day
Has lost its wonted radiance, I take
For solace all thy looks and ways and make
Them rainbow messengers from thee to stay
The lonely, lingering hours; and as I lay
My gloom amidst they sunshine there awake
Sweet memories and hopes that often break
To little songs that bear me company.

And then upon me there will sometimes steal
Those incommunicable thoughts that start
The rivers of the heart until I feel

The sudden tremulous rush of all thou art,
And in the fullness of it once more kneel
In reverence at the threshold of thy heart!

LOVE'S HIGHER WAY

Constrain me not! Dost thou not know
That if I turn from thee my face
'Tis but to hide the overflow

Of love? We need a little space
And solitude in which to kneel
And thank our God for this high grace

That He hath set His holy seal
Upon our lives. My heart doth burn
With consciousness of all I feel

And own to thee, and if I turn
For one brief moment from thy gaze,
'Tis but that I may better learn

To bear the unaccustomed blaze
Of that white light that like a flame
Thy love has set amidst my days.

For with that clearer light there came
A vision of the far-off sea
We mortals know not how to name,

That borders on Infinity.
Since when I am not all my own,
Nor wholly thine—some part of me

Responds to God, and God alone.
For love makes silence in the heart
As well as song, and rolls the stone

From buried selves, and makes us part
Of all that was and is to be–
High-priests of life; and though thou art

Revealer and revealed to me,
And my desire has been fulfilled,
And all my life is crowned in thee,

Yet there remains a chord that, thrilled
To keener sense, doth recognize
The spirit claim, and I am stilled

With deepened reverence that lies
Below all speech. Behold I lay
My heart in thine, O bid me rise

To find with thee Love's higher way
That leads past self into the wide,
Still reaches of eternal day!

POSTPONEMENT

Behind their veils of clinging mist,
    Elusive as a dream,
In changing rose and amethyst
    The mountains stood supreme.

Consumed as ny some inward fire
    Of brooding mystery,
They held the heart of his desire–
    His love and poetry.

And always, ever, some dear time–
So ran his hidden hopes–
He meant to leave his task and climb
Their beckoning emerald slopes.

To scale their precipices bold,
And watch the rose-wreaths rise,
To see the gates of Heaven unrolled
Before his longing eyes.

But always, always, something pressed
Between him and his aim;
He kept his dream, but gave the rest
To meet the common claim.

He ploughed the black and fertile plain,
And sowed the waiting soil,
And harvested the yellow grain,
And spent his days in toil;

Nor failed to give a helping hand
When others stood in need;
But strove to meet each new demand
With patient word and deed.

So went the seasons. Wrapped in mist
The mountains, blue and gold,
Behind their veils of amethyst
Still wait, but—he is old!

EXILED

Green banners just unfurled,
Summer comes apace,
There will be a new world
At the old home place;
Scarlet wing will flash by,

Meadow-lark will soar high—
O, and that is where I
        Turn my longing face!

Never days like those days,
        Never joy like mine;
All the world a soft haze—
        All the world a shrine!
Overhead, the blue sheen;
Underneath, the new green;
I with beating heart between
        Finding life divine!

Ah! and how the birds sang
        Every sunny day,
All the fields and woods rang
        With their ecstasy;
How my wanton pulse thrills,
How my homesick heart fills,
Thinking of those green hills
        Dear and far away!